Table of Contents

1. Welcome!!!
2. Allegiances
3. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
4. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
5. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
6. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
7. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
8. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
9. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
10. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
11. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
12. Dark Skies- #2 Book in Sunrise
13. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
14. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
15. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
16. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Surise
17. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
18. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
19. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
20. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
21. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise
22. Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Welcome!!!

Hey, this is my second book on Wattpad, a sequel to my first one-ThunderClan's Hope.

I have a big plot worked out for this, and I'm really looking forward to this!

This is estimated to be around 21 chapters, and there will be a few boring ones where the plot seems to go nowhere, but trust me, **every chapter is an important part of this story.**

Be patient with me-please-and I assure you that you'll enjoy the outcome of this story.

Okay, I'll admit that not every chapter will be something moving towards the main idea of this book, but that's because they are reserved for developing character relationships that may be important later in the story.

Okay, and most importantly, I really hope that you enjoy this book, I'm working very hard on each and every chapter. :)

EDIT: So, I wrote this book a while ago, and I'd like it hear so you all can see how much I've improved! :D If you want to read one of my more recent books, I recommend Echoclaw's Story! :D

Anyways, enjoy the book, and have an amazing day!

Allegiances

ThunderClan
Leader- *Ravenstar- Tom with jet black pelt, emerald eyes*

Deputy- *Flipnose- Light gray tom with dark stripes and green eyes*

Medicine Cat- *Fernsong- Cream she-cat with white spots, sky blue eyes*

Adderjaw- Brown tom with dark brown stripes and amber eyes

Moonrise- light gray she-cat with blue eyes

Warriors- *Sparrowflight- Jet black she-cat with green eyes*

Lightningstrike- Firey she-cat with moss—colored eyes

Scatfur- Dark brown tom with green/blue eyes

Peppernose- Light brown tom with black spot on nose

Starlight- Light gray tom speckled with white spots and blue eyes

Bristlefur- Gray tom with bright blue eyes

Twitchheart- brown tabby she-cat with turquoise eyes

Clawbark- Muscular dark brown tom with green eyes

Yellowstone- Glossy black she-cat with orange streaks

Fireclaw- Firey tom with pinpoint yellow eyes

Sunray- Orange tom with green eyes

Creamcall- Cream she-cat with emerald eyes

Queens- *Frostfang- white she-cat with blue eyes, mother of Mudfur's kits: Goldenkit (yellow she-cat) Clearkit (White tom) Hawkkit (light brown tom) and Sparkkit (brown and white she-cat)*

Dewstorm- long-furred gray she-cat with white patches

Elders- *Riverrush- gray and blue tom with blue eyes, one eye scarred from battle*

Pondnose- Gray she-cat with milky blue eyes

ShadowClan

Leader- *Shadestar- black tom with green eyes*

Deputy- *Pinefur- brown she-cat with blue eyes*

Medicine Cat- *Lightfoot- light gray tom with hazel eyes*

Apprentice- *Aloepaw*

Warriors- *Rainclaw- blue she-cat with green eyes*

Embercurl- orange tom with amber eyes

Apprentice- *Droppaw*

Raggedear- aging brown tom with yellow eyes

Stonenose- Dark gray tom with white on ears

Apprentice- *Cloverpaw*

Dawnscar- white she-cat with amber eyes

Apprentice- *Maplepaw*

Apprentices- *Maplepaw- Light brown she-cat with yellow eyes*

Cloverpaw- Dark brown tom with purple eyes

Aloepaw- Orange she-cat, blind, with green eyes

Droppaw- Light gray tom with blue eyes

Queens- *Heronshade- brown she-cat, mother of Webkit, Trailkit, and Spotkit*

Elders- none

WindClan

Leader- *Sprintstar- dusty she-cat*

Deputy- *Owlclaw- brown tom*

Warriors- *Peckheart- black she-cat*

Breezeclaw- black tom

Apprentice- *Softpaw*

Beetwhisker- Orange tom

Echoclaw- Light gray she-cat

Apprentice- *Pricklepaw*

Swooptail- Dark brown tabby tom

Apprentices- *Pricklepaw- Light gray she-cat*

Softpaw- black and white spotted she-cat

RiverClan

Leader- *Specklestar- black she-cat with white spots*

Deputy- *Troutclaw- dark brown tom*

Warriors- *Swipetooth- Muscular white she-cat*

Mossback- Gray tom

Ambereye- Red she-cat

Dustnose- light yellow tom

Tidetail- blue she-cat

Leopardfang- yellow spotted she-cat

Splashpelt- white she-cat

Skipper- Dark brown tom

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 1
Dewstorm gazed down lovingly at her newborn kits, her flanks still heaving. Adderjaw, Moonrise, and Fernsong had left the den now, telling Frostfang to keep an eye on her. Frostfang had four kits of her own, now. A pure white tom with green eyes that she had named Clearkit, a light yellow she-cat with light, fiery eyes she had named Goldenkit, a light brown tom with blue eyes named Hawkkit, and another she-cat with a brown and white patched pelt with amber eyes named Sparkkit.

As any queen with kits of her own would, Dewstorm couldn't help but think that her kits were, secretly, much more perfect, and her chest swelled with pride. Clearkit put his paws on Frostfang's back, looking at Dewstorm's kits. "Mom, why can't we play with them?" he pleaded. "They're newborns! You'll crumple them with a blow of a paw!" With that reminder, Dewstorm drew her kits nearer with a swoop of her tail. Her plain white kit, a tom, mewed pitifully and nuzzled her leg, urging it out of the way. The other two kits joined in, perhaps hoping that together, they could move her leg.

Dewstorm shifted her hind leg, and they all eagerly nuzzled at her belly fur. The entrance rattled, and Starlight ducked in. He purred with relief as he saw his beautiful children. He licked Dewstorm on the head. "Hello, my love." He meowed. He lay down next to her, staring lovingly at his kits. "They're beautiful." He murmured. The kits looked up and meowed at him, somehow knowing that he was their father. Starlight leaned his head in towards his kits. "Hello," he whispered to them. The light brown tom hooked his claws onto his muzzle, meowing at him louder. Starlight laughed softly and gently unhooked the kits' claws.

Dewstorm felt a stirring in her chest but pushed it away. She looked at the light gray she-cat and grinned. "Are we going to name them?" Starlight asked finally, his tail wrapped around Dewstorm. "Oh, yes, of course!" her pelt heated up. She looked at the white tom, staring

right into his bright green eyes. "Hello, Cloudkit." She whispered. Starlight looked at the light gray she-cat, his eyes sparkling. "She looks like a... Jadekit." He said. Dewstorm loved the name. Something in her tingled, and she paused.

Something seized her chest, and she coughed. It made her whole body jerk, and her heart began beating rapidly. She leaned over in her nest, gasping for a breath. She couldn't breathe, and she stared desperately at Starlight. He bolted up, his head jerking from Dewstorm to the entrance. He seemed to choose the help, because he ran as fast he could from the den. Frostfang was up, her kits meowing at her in protest. "Dewstorm, Dewstorm!" She shouted, standing a tail-length from her as she jerked back and forth in her nest.

She gasped for breath, fighting the pain in her chest, crying out loud. All three medicine cats rushed in, Moonrise ushered Cloudkit, Jadekit, and the light brown one out of the den. Fernsong held Dewstorm around, and Starlight rushed in with a thick stick in his jaws. Dewstorm fought against the pain, gratefully biting down on the stick. Her teeth dug into the stick to the point where her gums touched it. She couldn't bare the pain any longer, and she let the world slip away, her last sight the desperate look of Starlight, his eyes clouded with fear and pain, realizing that he was going to lose her no matter how hard the medicine cats tried.

The world went black around her, and everything went away, including her family. She felt light, and a beam of golden light filtered through a crack. Out stepped Weedtail, his pelt shining with stars. "Dad!" She exclaimed, her heart lifting with the sight of him. His tail lifted with delight, and Dewstorm realized that her paws were starry, too. "Welcome to StarClan." He purred.

Wait, StarClan? She gasped. "I'm dead? No, no, no, I just received the best gifts in my life, and I'm leaving it all behind?" Weedtail's tail drooped. "Well, yes. But you can watch them grow up here, just like I watched you!" He tried to sound optimistic, and her heart lifted as a tiny figure sprinted from nowhere, tail streaming from behind. "Skykit!" She called, and Skykit let out a tiny yelp of delight.

Skykit crashed into her, and Hopewhisker emerged from the horizon, "Dewstorm!" He called, and he ran quicker, tumbling her over when he arrived. "Isn't it strange how we both died at the same age?" He asked, and with a sharp look from Weedtail, he realized that he had grown way too casual about his death, as all StarClan members do, and Dewstorm hadn't reached that point yet.

Weedtail pulled her away from her family, leading her towards a pool. "Look in and concentrate on the nursery." He instructed her, and Dewstorm hesitantly gazed into it. The pool glimmered, and an image appeared, clouded and blurred. It was the medicine den. Starlight was in the nursery, his chin on Dewstorm's dead body. Her three kits pressed to her belly fur, whining. Her heart ached for him, and she wished she could jump into the pool and go back.

"They'll be here some day, but your life is in StarClan now." Weedtail meowed gently, his tail stroked Dewstorm's back. She was sobbing.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 2

Jadekit knew what was happening, and her heart ached for her mom, not Frostfang. She now sat by Dewstorm's dead body. She whimpered, she couldn't bring herself to cry. "She was a great friend, and a great mate. She had so much more love to share with her three kits and others. She suffered an untimely death, and I'm certain StarClan will welcome her." Starlight choked that much out in front of his Clanmates. Jadekit and her siblings pressed close to Starlight. Jadekit swallowed a lump in her throat, but it came back in her throat, larger than ever.

"She was a great mentor, and she taught me countless things that helped me become a better warrior, and a better cat. She always had the right way of teaching me things, and I'm glad to tell any cat that she was my mentor." Sparrowflight croaked, her eyes glued on the body, as if she was trying to get her words through to Dewstorm.

Jadekit know she shouldn't, but she tuned the others out. She looked at her brother, trying to remember his name. *Mom didn't give him a name!* She thought, and sat still through the rest of the vigil to tell Starlight. When most of the cats reluctantly left, she approached Starlight, who was lying next to Dewstorm. "Dad, I need to tell you something." She fumbled for her words, her tongue like jelly in her mouth. Starlight didn't move. He kept his eyes unblinking, staring at her.

Jadekit sighed and sat down next to him and Cloudkit, her other sibling on the other side of her. She opened her jaws into a yawn, settling into his chest fur. The night stars blurred, her eyes watery. Jadekit knew that she would never truly know her mother until she, herself, went to StarClan, and she drank the sight of her mother in, drifting off into sleep.

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Jadekit woke up with her litter mates, snug next to Frostfang and her kits. She sat up and rolled out of the nest. She peeked outside of the den, and saw half of the Clan already awake, busily setting up patrols and such. A figure approached her from behind, scooping her up by the scruff and dragging her back into the den. She looked angrily at Frostfang and glared at her. "I wasn't going to leave!" She said indignantly.

Frostfang drew back. Jadekit's other sibling smiled at her. "Hey, Jadekit, do you want to play a game?" He asked. Jadekit opened her mouth to reply when Starlight and *him* were called to the leaders' den. *Lucky. He gets to meet the Clan leader first!* He turned hesitantly to the entrance, following Starlight out. A dark brown tom came into the nursery. "Hey, Frostfang," He said casually, touching noses with her. "Hello." She meowed warmly, licking him on the shoulder.

"Hey, who wants to play a game of moss-ball?" He asked, taking a piece from Dewstorm's old nest. She cringed, trying not to tell him not to touch her mom's stuff. Clearkit, Goldenkit, Hawkkit, and Sparkkit squealed with delight, hurrying up to him. Mudfur took one last glance at Cloudkit and her before launching the moss into the air. Goldenkit hopped hand grasped at air, trying to snatch the moss from the airs' grasp.

Cloudkit and Jadekit hung back. She didn't feel much like play. Even from the protection of the den, she could feel the last Leaf-Bare frost biting through the fuzz covering her skin. She followed Cloudkit to the corner of the den, settling next to him in Frostfang's nest.

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The dark brown kit, Jadekit's other sibling, came back into the den with Starlight, his head hanging low. Jadekit raised her head from the nest, greeting him. He didn't do anything, and Jadekit rose from her nest. "What's wrong...." "*Deathkit."* He murmured to the ground. "*What?"* Deathkit began sobbing. "Ravenstar said that because...because... mom didn't name me before she died, that they would have to name me Deathkit, to symbolize her death."

He cried, his sobs muffled by Starlight's pelt. "And you just let him?" Jadekit glared at Starlight. "No, I told him that both me and Dewstorm liked the name Drizzlekit, and that we would've named

him that. Dewstorm would have been pleased to watch Drizzlekit grow up." His voice broke. Jadekit felt her heart crack a little. "I'm going to call you Drizzlekit. I like it better." Jadekit tried to make him feel better. *Like one cat out of the whole Clan will make a difference.*

Drizzlekit rubbed his nose on his paw, blinking hard. Starlight sat down in the den. "I'm excused from patrols for today, so, I can play." Jadekit's heart lifted, and she immediately climbed onto his back, hooking her tiny claws into his back as an anchor. Cloudkit and Drizzlekit climbed on, too, letting out little yelps as Starlight bucked, sending Jadekit flying into the air. She landed with a thump in Dewstorm's nest, and stood up in a flash. Starlight let Cloudkit and Drizzlekit slide off of his back, rushing to Jadekit. "Are you alright?" He anxiously licked one of the few remaining pieces he had left of Dewstorm.

Jadekit gently shrugged him off, and shook out her fur. "I'm perfectly fine." She announced, and Sparkkit padded over to Starlight. "Can you throw me off your back, too?" She asked pleadingly, rounding her amber eyes. Starlight just chuckled nervously, looking at Frostfang and Mudfur. Mudfur raised an eyebrow, but nothing more. "I...I didn't mean for Jadekit to...um, fall off." He explained, and Jadekit eagerly climbed back on. Starlight let her slip off again and backed out of the den. "Dad, wait! I wanted to show you my battle moves! Please stay!" Drizzlekit pleaded from behind him.

Starlight turned and reluctantly sat down. "How could I say no?" Drizzlekit seemed satisfied. "Now, I need a volunteer." Cloudkit nearly jumped out of his fur. "Me, pick me!" He shouted, his white fur spiked all the way up his pelt. Jadekit watched next to Starlight, glad to be near him. His fur was warm, and smelled like pine trees. Drizzlekit swayed on his haunches, letting out short, periodic hisses. "Ooh, I'm intimidated!" Taunted Goldenkit, who was watching next to her siblings. Drizzlekit narrowed his eyes, and began pummeling Cloudkit. Cloudkit rolled over, laughing. "Stop! It tickles!" Drizzlekit flattened himself in emberassment,

Jadekit felt bad for him, and she could tell every cat in the den except Goldenkit felt the same way.

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It was night, and Jadekit squeezed in closer next to Cloudkit. There was a slight breeze that raised her neck hairs, tickling her back, but she didn't mind. Cloudkit turned towards her. "Jadekit, stop, you're squishing me!" He growled, and Jadekit scooted away from him a bit. "Sorry," She whispered. Outside, Jadekit heard a rustling of leaves and a far off voice. "Starlight, are you okay?" Jadekit strained her ears to her the answer. "No, I'm not okay! I...." Jadekit couldn't hear anymore, Clearkit was shifting in his nest. "Would you be quiet?" She whispered sharply. Clearkit didn't reply because he was probably dreaming of his warrior name or something.

The whole den was quiet, except for the soft breathing of her siblings, Frostfang, and her kits. Yet Jadekit still couldn't hear Starlight's reply for the life of her. She sat up slowly in her nest, heart beating faster than ever, and crept across the den, as silent as a mouse. *Cats catch mice,* she thought nervously, and padded out of the den. *Wow! Camp's big!* She thought, creeping to a huge rock. There were five dens spread across camp, including her own. *Where's Starlight's den?* She wondered, Starlight was no longer in the center of camp, so he must be in a den.

The camp was huge, and there was a big hole in the end of camp, begging her to see what's on the other side of it. Jadekit glanced around, no cat was up. She padded towards the entrance. A figure jumped out in front of her, fur bushed. "What do you think you're-Jadekit?" Jadekit glared at the figure. "Yes, I'm Jadekit." She replied angrily. "Who are *you?*" The figure straightened, green eyes glistening in the darkness. "Oh, I'm Flipnose." He explained, fur lying down. *Flipnose? What kind of name is that?* She wondered. "I'm so sorry for your loss," Flipnose said, still standing in front of the entrance. "Um, yeah, I bet she was a great cat..." Jadekit murmured, embarrassed that she didn't now much about her mom.

"Can you please move?" Jadekit asked. Flipnose almost did, before realizing that Jadekit wasn't even allowed out of her den. "No. You need to go back to the nursery." He picked her up by her scruff. Jadekit flailed her legs. "I can walk!" She screeched at him, not liking the feeling of flying. Flipnose hushed her, and padded into the nursery, still dangling Jadekit by her scruff. Frostfang sat up,

waking all of the kits snuggled next to her. All six kits were up and mewing, and when the saw the cause of their early awakening, Frostfang's kits glared at her.

She shrunk into her pelt, and Flipnose dropped her with her siblings. Frostfang gave her a *we'll talk about this later* look. Jadekit wished she could dig a hole deep enough to fit her, Cloudkit, Drizzlekit, and Starlight in and be done with this situation, and no matter how much she stared at the ground, it didn't open up and swallow her like she so wished. Flipnose looked out of the den. "I have to get back, and I assume this is handled." Frostfang dipped her head, and Flipnose backed out of the den.

Jadekit missed Dewstorm, more than she ever knew she could miss a cat she never got the chance to know.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 3
Today was the day Jadekit could leave the nursery, and now she followed Drizzlekit and Cloudkit, who was trotting around like he was the Clan leader. A jet black tom padded up to them, a smile on his face. Jadekit stopped sniffing the fresh-kill pile and looked at him. "Hello, I'm Ravenstar." He said, dipping his head. Drizzlekit tensed. "You must be Cloudkit." He said happily as he looked at Cloudkit's fluffy white pelt. "And you-" Jadekit didn't like being stared at, and she squirmed under his gaze. "Jadekit," his gaze traveled to Drizzlekit. "And I've already met Deathkit."

He seemed reluctant to call him Deathkit. *But here he is, calling my brother Deathkit.* Drizzlekit tensed, but he held his gaze with Ravenstar. "You'll get used to it." He called over his shoulder, and at that moment Jadekit decided that she wouldn't like him. Drizzlekit puffed out his fur the moment Ravenstar turned his back, glaring at the back of his head. "Ravenstar will like me once I chew WindClan's ears off, and pummel those shady ShadowClan cats until their heads fall off, and chase those RiverClan cats until their legs fall off!" Drizzlekit began laughing mechanically, and several cats turned to see if he was okay.

Jadekit couldn't help but laughing, too, imagining Drizzlekit trying to gnaw the WindClan leaders' ears off , the leader trying to shake him off as he hung on by their ear. Soon Cloudkit was rolling over laughing. Hawkkit scowled at them from the warriors den. "Hunting patrols will include Starlight, Yellowstone, Bristlefur, and myself." Flipnose announced, and Jadekit wished she could go with them, too. Sparkkit padded over to them as fast as she could, her tail sticking up. "What's so funny?" She asked. Cloudkit gasped for breath. "Deathkit.... wants.... to WindClans.....ears off!" He fell back over laughing. Jadekit sat up, she needed to stay cool.

"*Deathkit?"* Sparkkit asked, her eyebrows knit together. Drizzlekit

sat up now, his expression serious. "Yeah, Ravenstar named me that, but you can call me Drizzlekit. That's what my mom wanted to name me." As Drizzlekit explained, Sparkkit's expression turned to concerned. "That's horrible! I *will* call you Drizzlekit. But," She hunched down. "Around Ravenstar, I'll have to call you Deathkit." Then Sparkkit left, returning to her littermates.

Frostfang stood outside the nursery. "Feeding time!" She yowled, and her kits came scrambling back. "That means us, too, I guess." Cloudkit mumbled, but Jadekit stayed where she was. "I know. But I think it's about time to try fresh kill." It was a bizarre sight to see Jadekit drag a squirrel from the fresh-kill pile almost as big as she was, and she hauled it into the nursery. "Let's share." Jadekit said, dropping the squirrel inside the den. Drizzlekit hesitantly bit into it and chewed, his eyes lighting up. "Mmmmm..." He closed his eyes, savoring his tiny mouthful.

Cloudkit and Jadekit had both had their own mouthful, too, before Frostfang lifted her head and realized what they were doing. "What are you doing? Eating prey?" Goldenkit, Clearkit, Hawkkit, and Sparkkit all scrambled away from their mother, eager to try the squirrel. Frostfang sat up, clearly puzzled of where Jadekit had gotten the idea of eating fresh-kill before she suggested it. Clearkit was snagging mouthful after mouthful from the squirrel, chewing slowly but steadily. "At this age, you don't need prey, you need milk. If you want to grow up to be strong." She was clearly tired and her face relaxed with relief as Hawkkit came scrambling back. "I only wanted a bite because Sparkkit tried it." He whined, and Sparkkit stopped chewing.

Eventually, they were forced into having milk instead of prey, and Frostfang went on about how great it was that they enjoyed prey, because they'll be hunting and living off of it for the rest of their lives, but right now, they needed milk for nutrition. Jadekit had tuned her out after a while, apparently it was one of her habits. Jadekit padded out of the den, looking to meet another warrior. *One of them will be my mentor one day.* She thought, and she wanted to know how to please them.

It was warm outside, and immediately, her pelt felt warm and cozy. She looked around the camp and saw a gray tom sharing

tongues with a black and yellow she-cat. Jadekit ran up to the tom, having a good feeling about him. As she approached, he looked down at her, his eyes friendly and welcoming. "Hi, I'm Jadekit. Who are you?" Jadekit thought she sounded friendly enough, but the tom narrowed her eyes at her. He shook his head. "Oh, sorry Jadekit. You just look so much like your mother." He said distantly. "I'm Bristlefur. And this is Yellowstone." Jadekit hoped Bristlefur could be her mentor. He seemed nice enough. Yellowstone smiled at her, her yellow and black tail curled.

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Drizzlekit hooked up a piece of moss with his claw, launching it at Jadekit's back. She turned to grab the moss ball, hooking it up with her own claw. Drizzlekit was out of his nest now, ready to catch it, whatever it takes. Jadekit hurled it towards him, and Drizzlekit dove to catch it, paws outstretched. He caught it and rolled head over heels. He fell into the wall of the den, causing it to shake a little. Drizzlekit sat up with a dazed look on his face, holding the moss in one paw. "Are you okay?" Frostfang hurried over to him from her nest, moss clinging to her pelt.

"Yeah," Drizzlekit stood up, shaking his head wildly. Frostfang seemed exhausted from watching over seven kits and feeding them all, and Jadekit felt a pang of guilt for being such a nuisance to her. "Let's play outside the den." Jadekit suggested, and Drizzlekit followed her out. Jadekit wished Cloudkit would go ahead and wake up from his nap already so they could all play together, but he seemed deep asleep last time she checked.

Drizzlekit picked up the moss ball, ready to launch it into midair when he froze and angled his ears towards the camp entrance. "The hunting patrol's back!" Jadekit said excitedly, and ran towards the entrance of camp. Drizzlekit hung back as Lightningstrike stuck her head through the entrance, but she didn't carry any prey. Neither did the other members of the patrol as they filed through the entrance. Jadekit wondered what type of hunting patrol doesn't bring prey back in the middle of Green-Leaf.

Mudfur approached Ravenstar, and Jadekit couldn't help but eavesdrop. "Twolegs have been on our territory again, and they've

left more of their crow food. We buried it, and we thought you may like to notify the other Clan leaders. This is becoming a major problem." Hair raised down Jadekit's spine. She had heard stories about them burning down territory, and to imagine them doing it to their burial grounds and their home- she shuddered. Flipnose stepped forward from the patrol, his eyes troubled. "Ravenstar, we've waited too long. We need to take action, now."

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The whole Clan was busy, and with the absence of Ravenstar and Flipnose, more work was added onto each cats' shoulders. Jadekit sat outside of the nursery watching cats hurry around camp. Moonrise and Fernsong were out picking herbs in case there was a battle, Frostfang was helping out any way she could, a small group of cats were on hunting patrols, some cats were at the training grounds practicing their battle moves, and Adderjaw was hurriedly preparing herbs and such. Jadekit itched to help them, so she padded up to Pondnose, who was lazily basking on a rock.

"Can't I help?" She asked Pondnose. She rolled over to face her. "Do you really want to help?" She asked. When Jadekit nodded eagerly, she climbed down the rock and padded into her den, beckoning for Jadekit to follow. Jadekit looked around the elders' den, admiring how neat the nests were kept. *By punished apprentices,* she thought darkly. "If you really want to be really helpful, you can help me get this tick off." Jadekit wrinkled her nose, but she wanted to show that she wasn't like the others, and that she could be helpful and she could be counted on.

She stared at the tick hard. "What- what do I do?" She asked. Pondnose angled her tail to a stare of mouse bile. Jadekit wrinkled her nose at the putrid stench. "Take some moss from my nest, dip it in the mouse bile, and dab it on the tick." As Pondnose explained, Jadekit flattened her ears slightly. "Okay," Jadekit said, taking a chunk of moss from her nest. She swabbed the moss in the bile, holding the moss on the tip of her claw. She dabbed the tick with the moss, and she was amazed when it released its' grip on Pondnose, falling to the ground.

Pondnose shook out her fur. "Thanks, Jadekit. That feels much better." Jadekit gave a tiny smile and left the den, not having much

else to say. Drizzlekit met her outside of the den, his tail so bushed it looked like a tree branch. "I just heard Starlight talking about RiverClan coming to camp next sunrise!" Despite the seriousness this situation could hold, Jadekit could feel a laugh bubbling up inside of her. "So now you can chase them out of camp until their legs fall off!" She exclaimed. Drizzlekit looked at her seriously. "It's an invasion!" He said, whipping his head nervously from side to side.

"They could be coming any moment now!" Drizzlekit had his fur bushed out, ready for a fight if it came. "What kind of invasion would it be if we knew about it?" Jadekit wondered aloud, grooming her fur. Drizzlekit let out a long sigh and padded away. *Probably going to try to find another cat to convince.* The camp was half-empty, kits, elders, a medicine cat, and a queen the only cats there. The camp, in fact, was so quiet and empty that Jadekit could hear the wind whistling in her ears. She sniffed the air, maybe she could be helpful and catch a mouse in the nursery! The nursery was empty except for Cloudkit, who was messing with the weaving of the den. "Are you supposed to do that?" She asked, her head facing the ground. "Do what?" "You know, mess with the den." Cloudkit let out a puff of air.

"I know that I've only known you for a few moons, but, you need to stop worrying." Cloudkit messed with the brambles in the den, and watched them fall from the web of isolation. Jadekit sighed and went to the corner of the den, still seeking mice. She watched the den, seeing nothing but a few worms slithering up from the ground. She sighed. Being helpful took a lot of patience. Jadekit could hear cats entering camp, but she stayed, watching for any mice that tried to sneak past her. Her eyes drooped, and she yawned. Her eyes got bleary, and she let herself drift into sleep.

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Her paws itched, and Jadekit looked down. A plump mouse skittered over her paws. It looked up at her, and her heart began beating faster with the chance of catching it. She nipped its' back, and the mouse froze. Jadekit guessed it was dead, she cracked it's spine. Jadekit slowly sat up out of her nest, shivering from the shock of killing something. She proudly carried it out of the den to show the others. "Wlook!" She shouted through the mouse, and

Frostfang looked up from the herbs she had been sorting with Adderjaw. "Wow, Jadekit! Look at that!" She beamed as Adderjaw turned and his eyes widened. "Wow, Jadekit, where did you get that?" Jadekit puffed out her tiny chest. "In the nursery." She meowed proudly.

"You should put that in the fresh-kill pile. With a battle coming, they may need it." Jadekit proudly turned to the fresh-kill pile, then stopped in her tracks. *Wait, a battle? They're going to fight the other Clans!* "Dad!" She ran to Starlight, who was sharpening his claws on a rock. "You can't fight RiverClan!" She pressed against his fur, breathing slowly in and out, breathing in his scent. Starlight looked at her, his eyes worried. "No, no, Jadekit, we're not battling RiverClan, or any other Clans." He soothed. "Then, then, what's happening? Why is everybody preparing for battle?" Jadekit asked, her heart caught in her throat.

"Twolegs. Twolegs have been on our land. RiverClan is coming to our camp, and ShadowClan is going to WindClan's camp. We're going to share them away." As Starlight explained, Jadekit relaxed, but it also made her more worried, fighting twolegs was dangerous. Frostfang had told stories about them terrorizing cats. "Oh." Jadekit said, padding towards Clearkit to let him know.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 4
The sun was warm on Jadekit's pelt, the warmest it had ever felt. RiverClan warriors and apprentices streamed through the entrance, and a white she-cat approached her. "Do you know where Dewstorm is?" She asked. Jadekit immediately felt her eyes prick. "She's...She's... dead." Jadekit choked out. The she-cat stiffened, and her eyes clouded. "Oh... who are you?" The she-cat asked. "I'm Jadekit, Dewstorm's daughter." She said, trying to sound friendly. "Oh, Jadekit!" The she-cat cried, purring loudly.

"Oh, I'm Splashpelt. I was Dewstorm's friend." Splashpelt purred some more, then stopped. "I...I suppose that she died birthing..." *well, this just turned awkward.* "No, Starlight said she died from.... problems with her heart right after she had...us." Jadekit stuttered, she didn't know mush about this. "Oh. Oh! You have siblings?" She paused. "Sorry, you're just, like, my closest link to Dewstorm, and she was a great friend to me." Jadekit nodded. She understood. "Cloudkit! Uh... Deathkit!"

Splashpelt seemed to stiffen. Drizzlekit and Cloudkit hurried over, curious to meet a RiverClan cat. "You smell like fish." Cloudkit commented. "Who are you?" Drizzlekit asked. "I'm Drizzlekit." "And I'm Cloudkit." "I'm Splashpelt. Where's Deathkit?" Drizzlekit lowered his head. "I'm actually Deathkit, but, Dewstorm *wanted* to name me Drizzlekit. She just... didn't get the chance to." Splashpelt looked down at the ground. "Oh... I'm sorry, Drizzlekit." "You know what? I won't make your legs fall off," Drizzlekit said, and Splashpelt smiled.

"Warriors!" Ravenstar and Specklestar were both on Highrock, yowling to their Clanmates. Goldenkit, Jadekit, Drizzlekit, Sparkkit, Cloudkit, and Hawkkit hung back with Frostfang and the elders, listening nonetheless. "Twolegs have moved onto our territory, threatening us and polluting our prey! They have no reason to make

our lives difficult, and today is the day we fight back!" Warriors yowled their support, roused to battle. The kits yowled, too, supporting their family. "Good luck Mudfur! We wish you luck, Starlight!"

The warriors paraded out of camp, letting out battle cries. "Get them, Splashpelt!" Jadekit cried to her back, and she could almost swear that she saw her tail wave back to her in thanks. Once they left, the Clan sat in silence, praying to StarClan for the best. "Twolegs are dangerous, Ravenstar shouldn't have dragged all of the Clans into this." Jadekit heard Riverrush grumble. "May I remind you that he dragged *all* of the Clans into this, and a few twolegs don't stand a chance against about fifty cats, maybe one hundred." As Pondnose reminded him of this, Jadekit felt comforted.

"And he'll come back with forty." Riverrush said darkly. Cold crept under Jadekit's fur, and she shivered. She knew that the battle would take place far from camp for the protection of the kits, but Jadekit sat listening at the entrance of camp, anyway. Sparkkit goined her at the entrance, her face betraying the worry she was obviously trying to hide from her littermates. "You know when cats ask you're okay, when you're obviously not okay?" Jadekit asked, striking up a conversation. "Yeah, like, right now, my mom asked me if I was okay. Like, uh.... my dad may be killed by twolegs and his body will be lost forever. Does that sound okay to you?" Sparkkit asked, and Jadekit shook her head.

"Or, when my mom died, and Frostfang sometimes checks up on me and asks if I'm okay. Would you be okay if your very own mother *died* and you had to deal with a foster mom? *No!*" Jadekit shook her fur out and said more quietly, "So we both feel the same way," Sparkkit nodded. Jadekit felt her heart beating in her throat, and her paws were shaking. She really hoped that she wouldn't need a foster dad, too. *At least Sparkkit has a mom if anything goes wrong. I have nothing but my littermates.* Jadekit knew she shouldn't be jealous, and that she should be comforted by the fact that somebody in StarClan was watching her.

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Jadekit must have fallen asleep, because she found herself waking

up to a camp full of warriors, none seemed bloody. She had fallen asleep next to the entrance, and she woke up to Cloudkit shaking her awake. "Jadekit! Come listen to dad! He's talking about the battle!" Jadekit struggled up from her sleeping position and shook her fur out from habit. She hurried over to where Starlight was talking to a group of warriors, and they parted to let her through. "You should've seen them take off running! They didn't even try to stay and fight! They hopped into their monster and they were gone! Every twoleg camp we went to, they took off r-"

Starlight broke off as he noticed his kits watching, waiting to see how it ended. "And, end of story!" He said, and Jadekit knew that wasn't all that had happened. "Tell us more! Uh... please!" Drizzlekit begged, following Starlight as he trotted to the fresh-kill pile. "Well uh..." Jadekit didn't listen to what he had to say, she was too busy listening to Ravenstar speak to Specklestar, the RiverClan leader. "Your warriors can sleep in the apprentice den, we don't have any at the moment. And, the rest can squeeze into the warriors den." Ravenstar said, having everything arranged in his head seemed like a Clan leader's job.

Jadekit padded forward, straining her ears hard to hear the rest. "I should really get back to camp. The queens and elders were left all alone." "Your warriors are way too weary to travel. Just let them stay here-" "How do you know if my warriors are weary? They are perfectly fine!" Specklestar argued, obviously not wanting to stay in ThunderClan camp. Other cats were gathering around to see their leaders fight. "How do *you* know if your warriors are weary? Just because you live with them doesn't mean that you know how they feel!" Ravenstar glared at her, and Jadekit felt herself stiffen.

"*I* am their leader, and, weary or not, if I order them somewhere, they will follow me without question!" Specklestar spat, her fur bristled. Her warriors were obviously tired from chasing twolegs around all day, and she caught Splashpelt laying on the ground, along with several other cats, her head resting on her paws. Specklestar looked around at her Clanmates and let out a long sigh. They stood up, ready to leave. With a whisk of her tail, Specklestar led the RiverClan warriors out of camp, casting a glare at Ravenstar on her way out. The whole Clan let out one huge breath they

seemed to be holding in forever.

Jadekit squeezed closer to Frostfang-she was scared of Ravenstar at times like these. Ravenstar huffed a heavy breath and began organizing a border patrol. "Yellowstone, Fireclaw, Lightningstrike, and, um, Frostfang. Go to the WindClan border." Frostfang shifted beside Jadekit. *That's allowed?* Mudfur spoke up. "Frostfang is a queen.... she can't leave her kits." Frostfang stayed put. "Oh, um, sorry Frostfang, errr... Flipnose. You go instead." Flipnose stood up slowly, as if waiting for Ravenstar to realize that he just battled twolegs and he went on the morning patrol.

Jadekit couldn't wait to be a warrior so she could help with this stuff, and meet twolegs. "When an I be an apprentice?" Jadekit asked Frostfang quietly. "Oh, soon." Frostfang breathed, snatching two mice from the fresh-kill pile. She carried them to the outside of the nursery. "Come, kits!" She meowed. Her kits, Cloudkit, Drizzlekit, and Jadekit hurried over to her, and Jadekit felt her fur prick with excitement when Frostfang let her try one of the mice. Goldenkit let out a grunt. "Mom, do you love me, or" she sighed. "*Them."* Frostfang seemed to cast a glare at her kit.

"I don't pick favorites." "Oh, mom, yes you do! Everyone know you got to love your own kit more!" Goldenkit made Jadekit's eyes prick, threatening to draw tears. Drizzlekit and Cloudkit squirmed uncomfortably next to her. "Well?" Hawkkit joined in. "Well, you're being a little hard to like." Frostfang grumbled. Jadekit felt her pelt warm, embarrassed that she didn't have a mother of her own. "Whhhhaaaaaaat!?" Goldenkit screeched, and she picked up the mouse and carried it inside of the nursery, grumbling "Mouse-brain" and "Fox-heart".

Jadekit just wanted to shrink into her pelt when Hawkkit glared at her, his eyes bleary. Clearkit and Sparkkit didn't seem to mind, though. After they had all ate their fair share of the mouse, Clearkit padded over to her. "You know, I'm actually glad that Goldenkit got a piece of her own mind. She's always being rude to others." Jadekit paused, before she decided to ask a question she really wanted to ask. "Is it even possible for Goldenkit to have yellow eyes and a yellow pelt? I mean, does any of your kin have yellow pelts?" Clearkit just laughed and said he didn't know.

Starlight was in the den, now, and he picked up a clump of moss from the nest. "Who wants to play moss-ball?" He called, and Jadekit scrambled to grab it as the moss flew through the air.
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"It's not that it's boring in StarClan," Dewstorm explained to Pebbleleg. "Just, when I was alive, it was so much more exciting." She gazed into the pool, where she had been spending most of her time. Starlight was playing with the kits now, and Jadekit leaped into the air to catch the moss. "Did you know that Creamcall's pregnant?" Dewstorm asked suddenly. "Or that Lightningstrike ate prey before the rest of the Clan got any?" "*Or* that Goldenkit has been being rude to my kits?" Dewstorm glared at her through the pool. "You're spending way too much time here," Pebbleleg said, sweeping his tail gently on top of the green grass.

Dewstorm let out a sigh. "I know, but I just have this feeling that if I watch them, nothing bad will happen to them." Pebbleleg gave her a look of sympathy. "Dewstorm, Twilightpelt is worried about you." Dewstorm grunted and dug her claws into the grass. "She *should* be worried about Starlight. He's her son." Pebbleleg sighed. He looked a lot younger in StarClan than in life, his light gray pelt shimmering. Dewstorm reluctantly stepped away from the pool, and she immediately wanted to go back to it.

Weedtail approached her, Stormclaw following him. "Hey," Dewstorm said, secretly peeking over the edge of the pool. "Dewstorm, you have a problem. You haven't even explored a fraction of StarClan." Stormclaw said. Dewstorm scowled at him and paused, watching with an open mouth as Goldenkit pushed over Drizzlekit. "Get out of here, Deathkit! You're depressing me!" Dewstorm turned to Weedtail. His mouth was hanging open. "Get him out of there!" Dewstorm cried. "That world is nothing but sadness and hateful hearts."

Stromclaw's brow was furrowed. He didn't remember how bad cats could be, since he had been in StarClan forever. Dewstorm watched, her heart aching, as Drizzlekit and Jadekit ran out of the den, only to circle behind it. Drizzlekit began sobbing, and Dewstorm did, too. Her heart caught in her throat when Starlight and Cloudkit found them, and he whispered comforting words to them, his tail

stroking Drizzlekit's pelt. *I miss you all. And don't worry, it'll be over before you know it.*

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 5
Jadekit trembled with excitement. *Finally! I'm going to be an apprentice!* Ravenstar was on Highrock, ready to make seven kits apprentices. Starlight began to lick his paw and draw it over her ear, and Jadekit sat still. "Cloudkit!" The Clan stilled at his aggressive way of silencing the Clan. Cloudkit stepped forward, and Jadekit could see his paws trembling. "You have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to become an apprentice. From this day until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Cloudpaw. Your mentor will be Scatfur. I hope Scatfur can pass on all that he knows down to you. Scatfur, please step forward." From the crowd, a dark brown tom with hazel eyes stepped forward, his tail twitching.

"Scatfur, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You have received excellent training from Creamcall, and you have shown yourself to be hardworking and loyal. You will be the mentor of Cloudpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to him." Cloudpaw and Scatfur touched noses, and when they fell back into the crowd, the Clan began to cheer. "Cloudpaw! Cloudpaw! Cloudpaw!" Jadekit cheered, looking happily around at her Clanmates. When Goldenpaw and Hawkpaw got apprenticed to Peppernose and Twitchheart, Jadekit began to grow anxious for her turn to arrive.

"Deathkit, please step forward." *That cat makes my fur stand on end.* Drizzlekit hesitantly stepped out from the crowd, looking towards the sunny sky to meet eyes with Ravenstar. "You have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to become an apprentice. From this day until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Deathpaw. Your mentor will be Clawbark. I hope Clawbark can pass on all that he knows down to you. Clawbark, please step forward." A muscular dark-colored tom stepped up to Highrock, the sun reflecting off of his pelt. "Clawbark, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You have received excellent training from

Flipnose, and you have shown yourself to be determined and kind to your Clanmates. You will be the mentor of Deathpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to him."

Again, the Clan began to cheer Drizzlepaw's new name. "Deathpaw! Deathpaw! Deathpaw!" They didn't cheer as loud, though, as if they weren't sure what to call him. Almost every cat in the Clan had heard his sad story. "Jadekit, please step forward." With a speeding heart and shaking paws, Jadekit did so. "You have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to become an apprentice. From this day until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Jadepaw." *Wow, Jadepaw! It sounds real nice.* "I will be your mentor." Jadekit felt her heart freeze and stop beating before it resumed, beating faster than ever.

Oh no, not with him! He'll make a fool of me and I'll never be made deputy because he'll.... The Clan quieted, breaths being taken in. "How long has it been since a leader took an apprentice?" She heard Bristlefur whisper from behind her. Ravenstar climbed down from the rock, and Jadekit's fur tingled at the silence. She could hear Ravenstar's paws stepping on the springy dew covered grass. "I feel that I am ready to take on an apprentice." This was the most awkward speech Jadekit had heard in her life. "And, to be Clan leader, it is required that you be brave and loyal to my Clan." Ravenstar let out an awkward sigh. "Which is why I have decided to become your mentor. I will pass on all I know to you."

When she and Ravenstar touched noses, she felt electricity spark through her. His nose was cold, as if all it had experienced was Leaf-Bare. As he drew back, she felt his gray whiskers brush her cheek. "Jadepaw! Jadepaw! Jadepaw! Jadepaw!" The Clan cheered her whole name, and she felt special that out of six other kits, he had chosen her.

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Jadepaw padded nervously through the woods with Ravenstar. They were taking a tour of the territory, and it was, she soon learned, a lot colder when the trees shaded them from the sun. He knelt down to face Jadepaw at eye level. "Okay, listen to me. If I order you to do something, you do it. I hope we can be friends, just,

it's a lot of pressure mentoring an apprentice. My reputation depends on you becoming an excellent warrior." *So that's why leaders don't take apprentices.* Jadekit was shaking. Again, she didn't like being looked at, especially not like this.

Ravenstar stood up straighter and shook out his glossy fur. *Creep.* "Look, over there is a ditch. Never go over there the day after it rains, it'll be flooded and muddy, and, once, I was with a cat and they fell into that." His tail angled to a huge ditch. It hadn't rained in a while, but she could see where water had pooled at the bottom, only a puddle. "Go and take a long look at your surroundings. When I was with the cat, she was chasing a rabbit when she fell in.... and drowned. Her name was Fadetail." Jadekit thought Ravenstar was kind of creepy and began walking again. "That's why I like your name so much. They sound alike. Maybe you could be Jadetail."

Maybe, Jadepaw just wanted to get away from the huge hole, but Ravenstar kept circling back around to it. A slight breeze cooled Jadepaw's fur. "You don't talk much. Fadetail didn't, either. Unless she was talking to Pebbleleg." These were a bunch of supposedly dead cats that she had never heard of, and she somewhat tuned him out. "Can we see the training grounds? I heard they're really big." There was about half of the Clan out here in these woods, and Jadepaw knew it. *Drizzlepaw's probably already seen half of ThunderClan territory. But it's all right as long as I learn all about Ravenstar's history.*

Her stomach growled. She hadn't ate at sunrise. "Oh, sure." Ravenstar suddenly replied to a question she had forgotten she had asked, and they both turned around. Jadepaw flinched as branches brushed across her face and the breeze tickled her fur. She came to a large rock, splitting the trail two ways. Jadepaw stood at the rock, waiting for Ravenstar to catch up. She followed him when he turned past the rock, rounding a bend. A small clearing stretched out before her, and she stared at the paw imprints on the ground.

She stepped into the clearing slowly. She felt her paws sink into a print on the ground, and her pads fit right into it. She wondered which cat's paws made the now permanent prints. Jadepaw liked the thought that Dewstorm may have done the same thing, and that her paws had stepped here too, so she stayed in that spot for a

while. The sun was setting by the time Ravenstar gave a flick of his tail to bring them back to camp. Ravenstar had already turned away from the training grounds, and Jadepaw hurried to catch up.

Ravenstar, she soon found out, was not a very patient cat. He hurried back along to camp, whether Jadepaw followed or not. He assumed Jadepaw understood what he was saying, and, if not, he turned to face her and scowled at her, narrowing his bright green eyes. "What does downwind mean?" She asked. Ravenstar had been talking about hunting for a while, and, since he had already mentioned downwind several times, she supposed she should have asked sooner. He turned and began to give her a look that made Jadepaw squirm inside of her pelt, but instead, his eyes began to widen. They stared past her and began to cloud.

"Fadetail!" Jadepaw drew away from Ravenstar as he ran to a tall tree, watching him from afar. "I'm so sorry!" He began to rub himself against a tree, and Jadepaw took another step back. Jadepaw watched as Ravenstar's face fell. "What... what are you talking about?" Ravenstar asked the tree, worry in his voice. That's when Jadepaw ran. She bursted through the bushes and began to weave through the pine trees, pine needles pricking her pads. Her paw hit some thing hard and she went staggering back. A pine cone. She gave it the look Ravenstar gave her and began running again, paying attention to the pine cones in her path.

Not too far from camp, Jadepaw paused, her flanks heaving. *That's the farthest I've ran in my entire life!* Then, all of the sudden, Jadepaw realized something that almost made her choke on her own breaths. *My leader, and my mentor, is crazy.* Jadepaw thought back to him talking to the tree, supposing it was some dead cat. Cold crept through Jadepaw's pelt, making her want to go back to camp even more. She began to walk back to camp, supposing Ravenstar would keep on talking to the tree for a while. And he did. By the time Jadepaw burst into camp, no sign of Ravenstar, the sun was fading under the horizon.

Drizzlepaw ran up to her. "Wow, I had the most fun ever imaginable! Where's-" "I have to find Flipnose." Drizzlepaw was beginning to look concerned, but he pointed his tail to the medicine cat den. Jadepaw hurried into there, where Flipnose had a white

glob of something on his ear. "Flipnose!" He turned to face her, the glob falling off of his ear. Adderjaw let out a frustrated grunt and growled through his teeth- "Stay still!" "Flipnose! Ravenstar's mad!" "Really, what did you do!" Jadepaw felt frustration drill into her pelt, and she narrowed her eyes.

"He's crazy! Like, talking to trees crazy! Like, 'stay in the medicine cat den so you don't hurt any cats.' Crazy!" Jadepaw let out a slow sigh as she got her point across to him. Moonrise peeked up from her work to stare at Jadepaw. "Where's Ravenstar now?" She asked calmly. "By the-" Flipnose cut in. "Ravenstar is *not* crazy. He was probably just talking to himself." "He was having a *conversation* with a *tree*!" Fernsong padded into the den, a bundle of herbs inside of her jaws. "Flipnose, *hold still!*" Jadepaw was getting angry that no cat believed her. "He'll probably still be there talking to the tree if you hurry!" Fernsong gave a loud sigh and shook her head.

"He was calling the tree Fadetail." Flipnose jerked up, poultice flying in all directions. Adderjaw groaned and began sorting herbs with Moonrise. The name seemed to catch Fernsong's attention, too. "She wouldn't know Fadetail unless he was talking about her. What did he say?" "Uhhh... er, oh! He said he was sorry, and then he began to rub against the tree." Flipnose and Fernsong rushed out of camp, as quick as a flash. "Old cats," Adderjaw grumbled, gathering all of the poultice spread over the floor. Jadepaw felt more confused than ever, and it felt like this had to do with a past she hadn't uncovered yet.

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Jadepaw watched Fernsong and Flipnose drag Ravenstar into camp, a bewildered look on his face. "What are you *doing*!???" He screeched as Fernsong led him into the medicine den. "You were talking to *trees*." Flipnose hissed into his ear, and Ravenstar turned to glare at him. "I do *not talk to trees*!" He growled, and Jadepaw scooted back from her spot beside the medicine cat den. "What do you think I am? A crazy badger-brain?" Fernsong padded over to Jadepaw and soothed her. "It's okay Jadepaw. He was talking to a bush when we arrived, insisting he was talking to Fadetail." She shook her head.

"I understand that StarClan communicates with us in different ways,

it's just..." She sighed. "Just... not this way." She walked away into the medicine den. Jadepaw felt everything spiraling out of control, and she shook out her fur. She turned to the fresh-kill pile, and nearly jumped out of her fur to see Cloudpaw's snow white face in front of hers. "Cloudpaw!" She screeched in surprise. Cloudpaw jumped back, his eyes wide. "I...I just wanted to see how training went," he murmured sullenly. "Sorry, you just scared me. It went good. How about yours?" Jadepaw asked. "Well, Scatfur's fun. He showed me around to the best places to hunt, and he showed me the borders, and, he even taught me a hunting crouch!" Cloudpaw said meowed excitedly. "Oh, let's go see the apprentice den."

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 6
Jadepaw was dreaming, and she knew it. She was in a perfect forest filled with moss on every tree stump and prey running around every corner. Jadepaw looked at a very plump mouse which was sniffing some moss on a tree root. She knelt down, her tail lazily swooshing on the grass. *Why catch a mouse in a dream when I can't catch one in real life?* The moss made a soft bed when it wasn't dry and crinkly. The mouse turned to her with its black beady eyes and blinked questioningly at her. "Yeah, yeah, I know, I can't even dream hunt." She muttered at the mouse. The mouse twitched its nose and skittered a step forward.

"Thanks for not eating me," It squeaked. Jadepaw jumped back in surprise and blinked her eyes slowly. "I mean, I'm not the only food in the forest. There's bugs, and caterpillars, and birds..." The mouse trailed off and yawned. "Sorry, I didn't get any sleep last night. Because cats were chasing me!" The mouse glared at her. "But you're good." *Because I can't catch anything?* The mouse straightened. "Oh, sorry, Jadepaw, I'm Sam." Sam gestured to the tree. "I'll help you out, since you helped me out. What do you want most?" He asked.

Jadepaw shifted her weight as she sat up. "Um....my mom." She said almost immediately. Sam's eyes softened. "I'm sorry, I can't do that, but I can show you her." Jadepaw nodded eagerly at him. "Follow me." Sam said as he walked into the hollow of a tree trunk. She reluctantly followed him, and the world turned pitch black in the trunk. Jadepaw continued to pad through the never ending trunk. She felt like she was flying, but she kept moving her paws. Her stomach seemed to be flying around in the air, leaving her behind. Just ahead, a spot of light appeared, growing larger and brighter as she went.

All at once, Jadepaw was on solid ground, and she was looking at a

starry forest. Sam was running through the forest. "Come on!" Jadepaw passed a few cats as she ran through the forest, but they didn't seem to notice her. Sam and her slowed as they approached a white she-cat with brown ears. "That's Dewstorm." Sam squeaked. Jadepaw felt excited to see her mother, but she hung back, skeptical. *Starlight said Dewstorm looked completely different. Like me. Or maybe she meant them...* Drizzlepaw was brown, and Cloudpaw was white. *No, he said me. And I don't look like this cat.*

"Jadepaw!" Jadepaw rolled away from the cat waking her up, just wanting to stay in her dream "No, no, no, noooo!" She murmured. "Go away." She opened her bleary eyes to see Flipnose. She sat up groggily in her nest and took a deep breath. "Ravenstar is being....questioned, so I'll mentor you for today." Jadepaw shook out her fur. None of the other apprentices wee left in the den. "It's okay, it's your first day in the den." Jadepaw looked at Flipnose, who didn't seem to be in a hurry. "What are we going to be doing?" She asked, the remains of her dream leaving her. "Hunting." Flipnose replied. Jadepaw shrunk into her pelt. She didn't think she could hunt a mouse.

Jadepaw walked across camp with Flipnose, and stopped outside of the medicine cat den for a moment. "I'm demanding you to let me go! I have an apprentice to mentor, and a Clan to lead." His tone lowered into a growl, and Jadepaw left with Flipnose in a hurry. "So, what did my mom look like? Dewstorm?" Flipnose thought for a moment before pulling the memory out of is head. "Oh, she was very pretty, and she looked a lot like you. She had a gray pelt, just like yours, with white spots. And green eyes. She was a very good cat, and I hope you can be, too, despite all of the evil around you...." He trailed off, thinking of something Jadepaw no longer was interested in.

"Oh, was she smart?" Jadepaw dragged him back into the subject. "Yes,f very smart and thoughtful." Flipnose meowed, his thoughts far away. "Was she loving?" Flipnose turned to her, his eyes glittering. "Yes, very."

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Drizzlepaw was eating a piece of prey when Jadepaw returned, carrying a mouse that looked disturbingly a lot like Sam. Jadepaw

approached him after she dropped the mouse in the fresh-kill pile. She sat down next to Drizzlepaw and sighed loudly. "Flipnose is exhausting." She breathed. Drizzlepaw rubbed his nose over his paw and sniffed. "Goldenpaw is so....horrible. We did battle training together today and she was acting like she wanted to kill me. I mean, she doesn't even know battle moves and she almost killed me!"

What? Nobody hurts my brother! "Where's Goldenpaw?" Jadepaw asked, her voice measured. "Over there. Don't embarrass me." Drizzlepaw pointed his tail towards the middle of the clearing where, of course, Goldenpaw, Hawkpaw, Sparkpaw, and Clearpaw were lounging lazily, each eating their own piece of prey that they probably caught themselves. Sparkpaw wasn't eating a piece, she was playing with a piece of moss. Jadepaw stomped over to Goldenpaw, who looked at her innocently with her golden eyes.

Jadepaw stopped in front of her face, glaring at her. "Did you try to kill my brother during battle training?" She growled, no caring who heard her. Goldenpaw's eyes rounded and she gave off a nervous laugh. "No, no. No matter how ugly and mouse-brained a cat is, I would never try to kill him!" Jadepaw glared at her so hard and she wished that her head could just fall off or something. "Don't mess with me," Jadepaw warned her, sounding more confident than she felt. She hadn't had a single training session on fighting, and she was pretty sure that Goldenpaw knew it.

Goldenpaw just laughed and turned away from Jadepaw. Jadepaw padded in front of Goldenpaw, her shoulders squared. "Listen to me. If you mess with any of my littermates, when I'm older, you'd better pray to StarClan it isn't a bad day for me." Jadepaw glared at her and stomped out of camp. It was a relief to her when she smelled the moss and trees surrounding her. She relaxed some and let out a breath she had been holding in. She found herself a stump and sat on top of it, wrapping her tail around her paws.

"Ugh, she's so mean, and perfect. It's not even possible for her to have golden eyes and a golden pelt. Her parents have brown pelts and white pelts. Ugh....AAAAAHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!" She screeched. She was too far from camp for any cat to hear her, anyways. She glared at the sky. "WHY DID YOU HAVE TO *GO*??!!!" She yowled at

the sky, her heart racing. She began sobbing. Loud, heaving sobs. She shut her eyes tight and tried to control her breathing. She choked on her own air, and dug her claws into the stump.

"I'm lo-I-I'm losing it." She gulped in air and swallowed. When she stopped crying, she sat, her throat dry. Jadepaw took a deep breath and watched the sun set. The sky turned red, and, for a moment, everything just disappeared around her and she was able to enjoy the sunset by herself. She watched coolly as a sparrow hopped on the ground, pecking at a patch of grass. Jadepaw sat up and stalked towards it, remembering what Flipnose had taught her. She lifted her tail off of the ground carefully and began creeping towards the sparrow. Her heart raced, and the bird flapped its wings wildly, trying to lift itself off of the ground.

Jadepaw rushed over to it, slapping her paw onto the sparrow and pinning it down. The bird chirped wildly, its wings slapping against Jadepaw's leg. Jadepaw gave it the killing bite and felt it go limp. "Sorry." She picked it up and carried it into camp. She took her time walking back to camp, she really didn't want to go back, and have to greet all of her Clanmates. She felt leaves brush the side of her face, and she drew away from the bushes. The moon was rising in the darkening sky, and Jadepaw began to wonder which way was camp.

The moon had rose into the sky. The stars and the moon were lighting her path, and she thanked Dewstorm for that. She glanced down a path into a clearing, and she wandered towards it. *Didn't the entrance to camp look like this?* She padded into the clearing, but the smell of cats was stale. She looked around nervously. *This place looks old... and it looks like cats used to live here. Maybe they still do. It would be really useful if I knew what downwind meant...maybe.* Jadepaw couldn't hear or smell any cats, so she turned around and tried to find her way back to camp.

"Wait!" A voice called from behind her. Jadepaw spun around to face the cat. The cat was a red she-cat with white paws. The cat stared at Jadepaw desperately. "Please, don't go. We need your help. I'm Amber. Tawny needs your help." Amber's meow was urgent, and Jadepaw couldn't help but notice how *plump* she was. "I have to go.." She turned and started to run from the clearing, back

to camp. Amber brought her down from behind, sending Jadepaw tumbling. "I asked you to help me. There's an easy way, and a hard way." She growled, her ears flat. Jadepaw let herself get pushed into a ratty old den. When she entered, she shook off the moss that had fallen onto her head.

A dark brown tom with amber eyes, who she suspected was Tawny was slumped into a nest. He looked over at Jadepaw, his forehead wrinkled. Jadepaw shrunk under his gaze, and was relieved when he started speaking. "What is she d-" he began coughing, and Amber rushed over to him. She couldn't do anything except for stroke his pelt with her tail. "See- we've heard of your civilization-" *civilization?* "And we need help from your doctors..." "What's a doctor?" "Healers," Tawny croaked. "And Tawny needs help bad. He's really sick." Jadepaw shook her head wildly and backed out of the den.

"No, no, no. Stay! Just bring us to your healer. If they ask us to leave, we will leave." Amber's yellow eyes were desperate, staring at Jadepaw, who didn't know what to do. *I'm just an apprentice! Every cat will hate me if I bring strange cats into camp, and then they invade, and it will be all my fault!* "Um...sure. But it's really dark, and the middle of the night...." Amber shook her head. "No, no problem. Sleep...uh..." Amber shuffled around the den, pushing old branches into the edges of the enclosure. She ran out and returned with a clump of fresh moss.

"Here." Jadepaw gratefully nestled into the moss and drifted into sleep.

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"Hey, wake up! We have to go!" Jadepaw sat up and blinked groggily. "It's Jadepaw." She said, letting out a long sigh. Amber nodded. "That's great." Tawny grunted, heaving himself up before letting out a wild coughing fit. Amber rushed over to him worriedly. "I'm okay. Thanks for asking." He growled, padding out of the den. With the sun rising, Jadepaw recognized her surroundings. "Oh, okay, let's go." Jadepaw stumbled around on her tired legs and led them through the forest. She began to have second thoughts about leading them into her Clan.

Tawny sat down and began coughing, like he was never going to stop. Jadepaw watched as blood was spit out, and he lye down on the hard ground wearily. *Uh oh. What if he dies before we arrive in camp? What if Ravenstar refuses to help them?* She felt a nervous worm creep through her stomach. "Let's go before the Clan wakes and begins patrols." Jadepaw insisted. Tawny stared at her coldly, motioning his tail to the pile of blood on the ground beside him. "Oh, um, you need help. Let's get to camp.

The rest of the journey was long and tiresome. Jadepaw took many stops for Tawny, and, finally, they arrived in camp. "Flipnose?" Jadepaw called, and he emerged from the warriors den. "Jade-oh my StarClan!" Who are these cats?" "They need our help!" Tawny's legs buckled, and he collapsed onto the ground. Moonrise rushed out of her den. "Come in, come in!" Starlight and Flipnose carried Tawny into the medicine cat den, not noticing his legs trailing limply on the ground. Jadepaw felt her heart racing, he suddenly felt weak. Ravenstar was nowhere to be seen, but Frostfang was. "Jadepaw, where were you last night? I was worried sick!" Jadepaw shook her off. "I got lost, okay? Just, please, I need some rest."

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 7
Ravenstar's eyes seemed to bore into her soul. "What were you thinking?" He growled, his voice deep. "I...I got...I got lost..and it turned dark, and I couldn't see..." She trailed off, and she watched Ravenstar's eyes darken. "What is your problem?" He hissed. Jadepaw sunk into her pelt. "Until now, I didn't think I had a problem." She paused. "What *is* my problem?" His eyes hardened. "You'd think that you have already found out." Ravenstar left her standing next to the fresh-kill pile, her fur pricking. *I don't have a problem...do I?* Self-doubt is the worst kind of doubt, and it crept into her mind, making her feel cold to the bone.

Sparkpaw padded over to her, perhaps yearning for company, the same way Jadepaw *didn't.* Sparkpaw fluffed out her moss-covered pelt. She had probably just woken up. "Jadepaw, did you hear about those strange cats? I've heard that the tom has a chest infection." Jadepaw didn't know how serious this was, so she didn't really feel very concerned. Amber was talking to Fernsong earnestly. "I'm telling you, people-or twolegs-they're here...I've saw them." Jadepaw rolled her eyes and turned tail, hoping to get assigned to a border patrol or something.

"Hey, Jadepaw, do you want to play moss-ball?" Jadepaw glared at Drizzlepaw, who had padded over with a clump of moss. "We're apprentices, not kits. We can't go playing moss-ball and train to be warriors!" Drizzlepaw drew back, his eyes hurt. "Oh, okay." He turned, and a few moments later, he was playing with Clearkit. Jadepaw rolled her eyes and looked at Ravenstar on top of Highrock. "Todays border patrols will include Frostfang, Twitchheart, Hawkpaw, Drizzlepaw, and myself." Jadepaw stiffly padded towards the entrance, following Ravenstar as he clambered down from Highrock. The thing Jadepaw wanted to do least was go on a patrol with a cat like Ravenstar.

She padded towards the camp entrance, and fell down when Hawkpaw landed on top of her. "Hawk-" she broke off and stared in disbelief. Twolegs were right outside of camp. The camp fell silent- they smelled them. *Oh my StarClan!* The twolegs were wandering around in the woods, twenty tail-lengths from the camp entrance. Jadepaw scrambled out from under Hawkpaw and cowered next to the warriors den. Scatfur had his muzzle next to her ear. "We can't let them see our camp!" The twolegs murmured amongst each other, and Adderjaw's eyes were wild with fear. For a second, Jadepaw got distracted and wondered if their camp had ever been discovered by twolegs.

Goldenpaw was inside the apprentice den, her yellow eyes sparking against the darkness. *Coward.* Jadepaw felt her heart racing. "I told you! They're coming for you!" Amber was next to the entrance, peering through the hole. *She is the bravest cat I've ever met in my entire lifetime.* The whole camp was silent, the warriors were gathered in the center of camp whispering. All Jadepaw could do was stay hunkered down, her heart trying to fly out of her chest. She whimpered, wishing that she was still a kit, if she was born just a few moons *later*!

The twolegs advanced towards the entrance, observing the walls of camp. Warriors streamed through the dirtplace, the apprentices reluctantly following. Jadepaw wrinkled her nose at the smell, before remembering that she was about to *die*. She saw the twolegs, their baggy pelts hanging from their clumsy limbs. Jadepaw hadn't ever smelled anything like them before, and there were about four of them. She let out a regretful sigh. *I'm going to die! StarClan, wish me luck out there...*The warriors advanced, and it was a moment before one of the twolegs let out a surprised screech and began swinging a piece of wood around.

Ravenstar hissed and lunged into the face of one of the more loud twolegs. "Attack!" He screeched, and the warriors of ThunderClan began swarming around the twolegs. The twolegs began to swing around their clumsy limbs, maybe thinking that they could catch one of the warriors. *Ha! Not a chance.* Jadepaw hissed and joined Cloudpaw and Clearpaw with a struggling twoleg. *With their ugly face. I'll help them with that.* She planted both paws onto their eyes,

and the twoleg began thrashing their legs and hissing unrecognizable words before she dug her claws in. Blood squirted, and she looked at her bloody paws, disgusted. The twoleg went crazy and sat up, yowling to the others. Flipnose yowled and dug his claws into its pelt.

"Nobody messes with my-" He broke off as he was thrown off, but he sat back up and arched his back, hissing. Sparrowflight practically flew past her, knocking down another twoleg. Jadepaw let her hindquarters sway before charging across the battlefield, hissing spit onto her own face. She launched herself into the air, wincing in pain as her hind leg strained itself. She screeched as she landed on a twolegs, the first one she had saw. The twoleg screeched and started hissing, putting their giant paws onto her pelt. "Stop touching my pelt!" She dug her claws deeper into the twoleg.

Starlight lunged onto the twoleg and bit their paw until they fell down with a thump. Jadepaw hopped off of the twoleg, feeling exhilarated, but Starlight continued to make them pay for messing with her. The twolegs began to stream through the trees, occasionally tripping on a branch. Drizzlepaw, Goldenpaw, Jadepaw, Peppernose, and Frostfang chased them until they were out of view for good measure. Once back in camp, Jadepaw stopped, panting. "Wow, that was great!" She meowed to Drizzlepaw. "Yeah, it was *great*." Drizzlepaw replied, not seeming too excited.

"What's wrong?" "Nothing's wrong." "Well, then why don't you sound excited? We just fought-" a loud cough broke her off. The cough sounded again from the medicine cat den, the loudest cough Jadepaw had ever heard. She jumped back. Hacking came from the den, and Jadepaw cringed when the hacking came to the sound of vomiting. Jadepaw looked back over to Drizzlepaw and shook out her pelt. It was warm in the sunshine, but that didn't mean that she had to be happy. Cats were filing into the medicine cat den to complain about their injuries and bruises the twolegs had given them.

"I have to go." Drizzlepaw padded into the medicine cat den with a group of other cats. Jadepaw sighed and looked longingly at the

space where the fresh-kill pile had been. *That's what happens when each cat gets their own piece of prey...*cough cough* Goldenpaw, Hawkpaw, etc...* Jadepaw felt anger spark in her chest at how selfish and greedy they were to not share prey when they knew that, even if it was Greenleaf, it was scarce. "Border patrol, we're going." Ravenstar called, and the patrol assembled around him.

Jadepaw padded over to join the group when she heard a yowl. She turned to see Fernsong outside of the den, staring eye to eye with a long, hissing, leg-less creature. "Snake!" Bristlefur hissed, and urged Fernsong to get out of its way. "N-no...I can't..." she stammered. Jadepaw froze to her spot halfway across camp. The snake hissed again, and began advancing towards Fernsong. Adderjaw rushed back inside of he medicine den, herding Tawny away from the entrance. "Get out of there!" Riverrush shouted, his fur bristling down his spine.

Fernsong slowly got to her paws and inched away from the snake. "Move!" Jadepaw called, and the snake began to slither towards her. Fernsong dashed away from the medicine cat den, and Jadepaw watched with her heart in her throat. She wanted to warn Fernsong not to turn around, the snake was already way too close, but she couldn't. Her tongue seemed tied to the roof of her mouth. Fernsong turned, only to see the jaws of a snake, open wide. The snake gave a hiss and bit down hard on Fernsong's front leg.

Jadepaw gasped as Fernsong fell to the ground silently, writhing in pain. The snake was gone, and the whole Clan gathered to see. "Move! Give her some space for once!" Adderjaw hissed from the medicine cat den, Moonrise pushing past him. Ravenstar should have been there, but he had disappeared. "I don't think it's poisonous!" He yowled to no cat in particular. "Tell my leg that." Fernsong grunted, shifting so he could get a better look at the leg. Scatfur stepped forward. "Hurry, treat it!" "With what? Cobwebs?"

Fernsong moaned in pain. "Hurry! Find some cobwebs, uh, anybody! Sparrowflight, grab us a stick! Frostfang, do you know what burdock root looks like?" Adderjaw didn't wait for an answer. "Go get some! Moonrise, get some chervil!" He paused, not being able to think of anything else. Creamcall and Yellowstone arrived with pawfuls of cobweb, and Adderjaw waited helplessly for his

herbs. Jadepaw couldn't feel her paws, and she stayed rooted to her spot. Fernsong wasn't moving anymore, and Jadepaw wished that she knew if Fernsong was alive or not.

Jadepaw was determined to see, and she took a few steps forward. Fernsong's flanks were moving, but not very much. "Fernsong, hold on, I have the herbs now." Adderjaw murmured, panicked. "I...don't want to hold on." Fernsong croaked, and Jadepaw felt a huge lump grow in her throat. "Not anymore..." Jadepaw thought she saw her flanks stop moving, but Fernsong was still speaking. "Adderjaw, you know I'm old, and you're a great medicine cat....take care." Her flanks stilled, as if she had been holding on only until she could talk to Adderjaw, and that she had just let go.

Adderjaw didn't stop pressing cobwebs onto her wounds, he didn't even let out a cry of grief, as if he didn't realize she was gone. The whole Clan stilled, but Adderjaw busily chewed on herbs, letting them trickle onto the cobwebs. He pressed the cobwebs onto her leg and kept adding more cobwebs until you couldn't see any pink leaking through them. Moonrise was the first to speak. She approached Adderjaw and put her tail on his shoulder. "Adderjaw, stop." He didn't listen. "Stop." Her voice hardened, but Adderjaw didn't acknowledge her and continued licking the wound and pressing the cobwebs back on as they peeled off.

"Adderjaw, stop!" Moonrise shouted, her voice catching. Adderjaw froze, and the cobwebs fell to the ground, revealing two finely marked bites, blood still oozing from them. "She's gone." She meowed quieter, leading him into the medicine cat den. "No," Jadepaw heard him whisper. *Fernsong is dead.* It took a moment for realization to sink in, but when it did, it didn't sink, it crashed. Suddenly, Jadepaw felt sick and insecure in her own camp. The whole world spun around her, and she wondered if this is how her dad felt when Dewstorm had died. She felt lightheaded. Sick. Scared. Everything a cat doesn't want to be when they are training to be a warrior. Jadepaw didn't have many memories, much less of her mother, but she missed her so much.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 8
Nightmares. Jadepaw had them for the past moon after Fernsong's death.

She was in battle training with Ravenstar, learning some basic moves that she already knew. Jadepaw dove in for a belly rake, and achieved the move with sheathed claws. "Good-" Ravenstar's meow wasn't broke off by a sound, but he just disappeared. Jadepaw felt fear bubble up inside her, and she was in camp, suddenly. It was night, and she and Ravenstar were the only cats in camp. Ravenstar didn't seem to notice Jadepaw, and his eyes turned a red color.

He began yowling a battle chant wildly, sprinting to where Jadepaw was standing. This was the most wild dream Jadepaw had ever had in her lifetime. She jumped up, willing her dream-self to move, but she couldn't. Ravenstar crashed into her. Jadepaw didn't fall, but she felt a series of tingling down her spine.
* *. *
Jadepaw couldn't see, but she could hear gentle snoring. She tried to look around, but wherever she turned her head, pitch black surrounded her. She could smell all of her Clanmates, but she also smelled the night air. She shivered, even though she couldn't sense if she had a body or not. She heard pawsteps, and she followed them. Suddenly, loud screeching burst through her ears, and she heard the rustling of cats leaving their nests. Silence.
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Jadepaw could see this time, and everything was silent, except for the dripping of water in a pool. The moon reflected in the pool, and the whole cave gave her a sense of peace. Jadepaw relaxed, and a starry cat appeared. Their blue eyes glittered kindly, before letting out a yowl that could bring down the forest. The cave spun, transforming into...*a medicine cat den?* Jadepaw watched, and she saw unrecognizable cats looking down on a scrawny cat in a bed of moss. The cat writhed in pain, and lay limp. The den disappeared, leaving her in the dark before a blurry image of three kits appeared.

One was white, one was blue, and another was black. They all looked like they weren't related to one another, because they were all separated into different corners of the den, with different cats looking over them. The black kit ran over to the white one, and began to play-fight with it. The blue kit ran over, but Jadepaw didn't get to see what happened next.

The image flickered away, and a clearing replaced it. There were berry bushes everywhere, and the dark red berries exploded into a river of blood. The river was streaming fast, spraying droplets of blood onto her fur. One landed on the tip of her nose. It was a dark red, and it exploded into her face, her eyes. Her mouth. Jadepaw tried to wake herself up, but she felt like she had no power over her body. A voice sounded through the clearing. "The skies will darken, and one cat can throw everyone's faith in one another." The voice boomed in Jadepaw's ears, causing them to ring loudly.

"Jadepaw! Jadepaw! Wake up before you get in trouble for sleeping in!" Jadepaw woke up to see Clearpaw standing over her with a mouse in his jaws. "Are you okay?" He asked through the mouse. Jadepaw nodded and sat up, letting the moss clumps fall from her pelt. Jadepaw left the den and began to clean herself. She licked her paw and drew it absently over one ear. Jadepaw began to lick her back, pausing as she saw Clearpaw out of the corner of her eye. "I just was er wondering if, uh, you know, er...wanted to, um, share the mouse. I mean, *this* mouse." He corrected himself, showing him the prey.

"I...Um, I went out last, I mean, tonight, Um...this morning and, um, caught it. Not for you, just, uh, for the Clan...do you want it?" Jadepaw laughed. "Um, I , er, sure." She said jokingly. Clearpaw relaxed and sat down beside her, setting the mouse down in front of him. Jadepaw strained her neck to reach the mouse and took a small bite out of it. Clearpaw let out a nervous laugh and nudged it closer to her. "Thanks." She savored the flavor, almost certain that she wouldn't be eating for the rest of the day.

"Don't worry, I woke up late, too. I had a nightmare." Clearpaw shivered. "I did, too. It was really weird." Jadepaw said this after a mouthful. He nodded. "Mine was really confusing and scary. I think I saw StarClan." *Wow. I think we had the same dream!* Jadepaw

swallowed, avoiding talking about her dream. "So....tonight's our first Gathering." Jadepaw said. Clearpaw nodded eagerly, chewing quickly. He swallowed. "Yeah, I'm really excited! They're going to announce us becoming apprentices in front of all of the Clans!"

Jadepaw shrunk into her pelt, standing up. "We get to meet all of the apprentices from different Clans, too! I've always wanted to meet RiverClan cats, I've heard that, by the time they're warriors, they've ate so many fish that they grow scales." Jadepaw nodded. She padded away from Clearpaw after a while of silence. "Wait-uh, er, never mind." Clearpaw stuttered and left Jadepaw to leaving.

Drizzlepaw was at the entrance, his eyes bewildered. "What's wrong?" Jadepaw asked. "Nothing. Just a bad dream." Drizzlepaw yawned and stretched. "I didn't get much rest." Jadepaw knew she got more rest than any cat in camp except the elders, but she yawned, too. "Jadepaw!" Jadepaw turned to see Ravenstar waiting across camp at his den. She sighed and left Drizzlepaw to himself. *I wish I had gotten a different mentor, and then maybe I could learn more things.* Ravenstar met her halfway there. "Today we'll be learning some battle moves." Battle moves were the only things that Jadepaw had been taught, except for the occasional hunting move.

They left camp. Jadepaw loved when the sunlight hit her pelt. When they arrived at the training grounds, Ravenstar immediately dove headfirst into training. "We'll be practicing surprise tactics. Now, sneak up on me." Confused, Jadepaw ran back into the trees. Ravenstar had his back facing her, and Jadepaw watched him through the tree branches. She silently padded her way back through the leaves, careful not to crack a twig. She lurked through the shadows. As long as she could make it through the leaves, she would be great.

The moment she appeared from the shelter of the trees, Ravenstar held up his tail. "Wai! I know you're just out of the trees." Jadepaw froze, watching Ravenstar slowly turn around. "I could smell you," he meowed creepily. "How could you *not* smell me?" Jadepaw argued. "You could start by sneaking up on me downwind." Ravenstar meowed calmly. Jadepaw felt her fur bush. "It would help if I knew what downwind *meant!*" "Every cat knows what downwind means!" "Well, obviously, not *me*. You never taught me!"

"Maybe you just don't remember."

Ravenstar took a deep breath. "Face the wind, that way, the wind isn't blowing your scent towards the cat you're sneaking up on. That's what downwind means." Jadepaw nodded silently and snuck up on him from the other side-now she could smell him. She picked her way through the leaves carefully, paying extra attention to them when they look brittle and dry. Jadepaw looked at Ravenstar, who was wandering around the clearing, sniffing the bordering bushes. Jadepaw began to charge at him. *Smell me or not, here I come!* She landed on Ravenstar's back, her claws sheathed, and he dumped her off, rolling over.

"What are you *doing?*" He snarled, shaking out his pelt. "I was-" "Save it for later. You can start making your way back to camp. I'll meet you there." *But we just started!* Jadepaw thought angrily, stomping out of the training grounds. She ducked under a low-hanging branch and let out a frustrated grunt. *Out of every cat in the whole Clan I could've got for a mentor, I had to get the Clan leader, which I'm pretty sure isn't even allowed.* Jadepaw's spirits lightened some as she remembered the Gathering. She trudged on through the forest, taking a shortcut through the thick undergrowth.

All Jadepaw wanted to do was be alone, but she knew she'd better get back to camp. She hurried through the undergrowth, and her pelt began to itch. She shook out her fur and observed her legs. Burs were tangled into her fur. Maybe this wasn't the best way to travel. Jadepaw was halfway back to camp, so she decided not to turn back around. She trudged on, feeling a bur dig its way into her skin. It was a relief when Jadepaw arrived at camp. Adderjaw was in the medicine cat den, and she didn't see Moonrise anywhere, so Jadepaw went into the den to go and complain to Adderjaw about the burs.

Not like he'd care or anything. Adderjaw looked up from a pile of herbs he had been sorting. "What do you want?" He asked. He was looking back down on his herbs. "Um...I need help getting these.." "*Burs?"* Adderjaw grumbled, and turned to his stores of herbs. He plucked off the burs with one claw and placed a thin layer of cobwebs where the burs used to be. "Um...why cobwebs?" "So no more burs can get on your leg." "Do I really need cobwebs?"

Adderjaw shook his head as he grabbed a big leaf from a pile. "*No.*" "Then why do I have these on?" "Because there's no treatment for burs," Adderjaw grumbled.

"How about something to keep it from itching?" Adderjaw widened his eyes as far as they could go and rolled them. "I can't help you with that," He grumbled. Jadepaw narrowed her eyes at him, and she wished that Adderjaw would turn around and see the look he was getting from her. Jadepaw left the den and laid in the patch of grass outside of the apprentice den. She grass was cold in the shade of the den, and she gratefully let the grass cool down her itchy pelt. The sun was high in the sky by now, and Ravenstar still hadn't returned.

Jadepaw watched Goldenpaw snatch up a squirrel and carry it over to where Cloudpaw was basking in the sun. *Sometimes life just isn't fair.* Jadepaw thought. Finally, Ravenstar appeared in camp, dropping a plump mouse onto the fresh-kill pile. Jadepaw cocked an eyebrow at him, but didn't say anything when he passed her. Jadepaw knew that when sun began to set, the Clan would leave, and at the Gathering, the leaders would announce important things to the other Clans, and she had heard a rumor that if StarClan got angry, the moon would be clouded, but she just didn't feel prepared.

If every time StarClan got angry they made the sky cloud, then I still wouldn't have seen a speck of daylight by now. Jadepaw thought ruefully. She continued to question everything she had heard, and she stopped at the warrior code. Everything about the code was honorable and within reason. She looked at Goldenpaw, and repeated the rule about *no killing cats* in her head. Jadepaw doubted she would ever try to kill Goldenpaw, but seriously hurt wasn't ruled out. Goldenpaw was sharing her squirrel with Cloudpaw, her glossy pelt pressed against his. Jadepaw almost laughed out loud when she saw the look on Cloudpaw's face.

He looked miserable, his eyes were focused only on the squirrel while Goldenpaw tried to force a conversation out of him. When Jadepaw saw Drizzlepaw pad over with a scrawny mouse in his jaws, Jadepaw braced herself from the other side of camp. *This is going to be good.* Jadepaw watched Drizzlepaw sit down next to

Cloudpaw and begin to talk to him. Surprisingly, Goldenpaw let him and just sat there, eating her squirrel by herself. Jadepaw almost felt bad for her, but only for a moment, then she began to let a smirk slide across her lips.

"Okay, everybody! Gathering time!" Ravenstar callled, and Jadepaw rushed over to Ravenstar, as if she was worried he would leave without her. *I couldn't care less if Ravenstar got buried alive right now, but I need to get to that Gathering, no matter which leader is taking me.* Jadepaw knew that she shouldn't even think that, but she couldn't help herself. She was surprised she hadn't said it aloud yet. Starlight and her siblings were next to Jadepaw when they left, and the Clan was as loud as a pack of twolegs tromping through the forest.

By sunrise, the prey would be settled down again, ready to be caught. Starlight yawned, and Jadepaw whipped around. "It's not even sunset yet! You can't go to sleep!" Starlight just laughed and parted his jaws, yawning again. "I'll try as hard as I can." He joked. Jadepaw followed the group, not knowing where to go, since this was the first time she had attended a Gathering. She felt her heart pounding-this was her first Gathering, and she didn't know what to do when she got there.

Drizzlepaw purred excitedly. "Just a little bit longer, and then we're at the Gathering! Which Clan are you going to meet with?" Jadepaw shrugged. "Probably RiverClan. I want to see if they really have scales." Drizzlepaw nodded. "I'll probably see ShadowClan or WindClan. Not RiverClan. They're too much like fish." Drizzlepaw shivered. "Look, we're almost there!"

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 9
The Gathering was loud, and the biggest group of cats Jadepaw had seen. Jadepaw followed Sparkpaw into the group of cats, worried that she may get lost if Sparkpaw's tail tip disappeared into the crowd. Jadepaw felt her heart beating hard in her chest. The Gathering was way more packed than she had expected it to be. Different colored pelts blurred around her, and she couldn't see a single cat with scales. Sparkpaw stopped, and Jadepaw recognized the white pelt of Splashpelt.

"Splashpelt!" She called, and the she-cat spun around, her expression relaxing as she recognized Jadepaw. "Hey, Jadepaw, you're an apprentice?" Jadepaw nodded. "Why don't you go see Foldpaw? He's my apprentice. The one with the dark red fur and yellow eyes." Jadepaw looked around the group, and she spotted Foldpaw with a group of other apprentices. "And I caught seven mice! In one-" "Excuse me, are you Foldpaw?" The second after Jadepaw let those words out of her mouth, she regretted it.

The other two apprentices turned to her, one with a cream colored pelt and milky brown eyes. The she-cat glared at her. "Sorry. Uh, I'll just go..." Jadepaw said awkwardly. She turned. *Maybe WindClan. ShadowClan scares me.* "Wait." Foldpaw called. "Um, er, stay." Jadepaw turned back around and looked at him. His eyes sparkled, and Jadepaw decided to stay. "What's your name? I'm Foldpaw." "I'm Jadepaw." The cream she-cat turned to face Jadepaw. "And I'm Cherrypaw." She grunted. "I wish I could be Jadepaw. It's a nice name."

"Thanks." Jadepaw smiled. A blue tom looked at her and blinked coolly. "I'm Streampaw." He meowed. "What Clan are you from?" "ThunderClan." "Wow, ThunderClan. Is it cool there?" Jadepaw nodded. It turns out that Streampaw and Foldpaw lived in RiverClan, and Cherrypaw was from ShadowClan. "Let the Gathering begin!" A dusty colored she-cat yowled. "WindClan will

begin. Now that GreenLeaf has begun, prey is practically running into our paws. We have two new apprentices, Sorrelpaw and Stripepaw."

"Sorrelpaw is being trained as a medicine cat by Woolwhisp, and Stripepaw is being mentored by Swooptail. We did have an encounter with twolegs, but-" "We did, too!" Another one of the leaders exclaimed. "So did we!" Ravenstar and another leader said. "It looks like the twolegs think that they can intrude on our territory." Ravenstar growled. A murmur arose from the Clans. "Did you get to fight the twolegs?" Cherrypaw asked. "Yeah, twolegs are weird." "Aw, when I became an apprentice, it was delayed by half a moon or so....so I missed the battle with the twolegs." She shrank into her pelt.

"No, I think we scared him away," The WindClan leader said confidently, puffing out his chest. "We scared them pretty good." WindClan cheered proudly. The other Clans yowled how tough they had been, also. "Enough!" Ravenstar yowled. "Breezeclaw and Peckheart have had three beautiful kits, Trailkit, Creekkit, and Swirlkit." The Clans whooped and cheered for the new birth. Jadepaw flattened her ears against the noise. "Well, Ravenstar, would you like to go next?" The WindClan leader asked. Ravenstar dipped his head politely.

He cleared his throat and his voice rang throughout the clearing. "ThunderClan is doing well, and we have seven new apprentices." The Clans gasped in delight and surprise. "Jadepaw, Hawkpaw, Goldenpaw, Clearpaw, Cloudpaw, Deathpaw, and Sparkpaw were apprenticed in the past two moons." The Clans murmured. "Deathpaw?" Cats whispered to each other. When cats tried to be quiet, that's when they were the loudest. "Dewstorm passed soon after giving birth to Jadepaw, Deathpaw, and Cloudpaw." Sad sighs echoed in the clearing. "I'm so sorry," Streampaw murmured.

Jadepaw nodded solemnly, turning her attention back to Ravenstar. "Our medicine cats did the best that they-" "Where are your medicine cats, anyway?" Harewater, the WindClan medicine cat asked. "Um..They're tending to a sick cat." Ravenstar perfectly covered up the truth, that they were caring for a rouge with Greencough. "What's wrong?" A warrior called from the

ShadowClan crowd. "Nothing severe. Just a phase of Whitecough. They'll recover quickly." Jadepaw immediately spotted holes in his explanation, and she was the only one.

"Is it necessary for the medicine cats to stay?"A worried ShadowClan medicine cat wondered. "It *could* easily grow into Greencough," A cat commented. It already *was* Greencough! Maybe more than Greencough. Jadepaw shifted. "We are very aware of that, which is why medicine cats are staying with him." *Smooth,* "Oh, who's sick?" The RiverClan medicine cat asked, her tail waving nervously in the air. "Tawny." "Never heard of a name like that," Foldpaw murmured from beside her. "You mean you're caring for *rouges* in your camp?" A RiverClan warrior yelled from the back of the crowd.

"Um....yes." "They could make your whole Clan sick!" "Or they could be murdering your medicine cats right now!" Cherrypaw said that. Jadepaw turned to glare at her and stopped as realization hit her. They really *could* be killing the medicine cats. She shook that thought all the way out of her head. "One of the rouges is sick, and the other is frail! I'm proud to say that our medicine cats can match up to them." Ravenstar growled. "And we trust them." He cleared his throat again. "We have a new queen that couldn't be here tonight, Creamcall is having Peppernose's kits in a few moons."

The Clans cheered loudly again. "Well, that's all of ThunderClan's announcements." Ravenstar said.

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The medicine cats weren't dead, and Tawny wasn't any better. In fact from what Jadepaw could tell, he was worse. She wasn't a medicine cat, but he was spewing blood, and she didn't think that was very good at all. Jadepaw settled into her soft nest. It was late into the night, and her muscles were weary and sore, but she wasn't able to go to sleep. She tossed and turned in between Cloudpaw and Sparkpaw. Cloudpaw turned his back to her, muttering something about rabbits flying. Jadepaw let out a loud sigh, deciding to roll over herself.

Her nose dug into Sparkpaw's fur, and her nose twitched wildly. Jadepaw inhaled sharply. "Ah-aaah-aaaaaahhh....CHOOO!" She sneezed into Sparkpaw, and Sparkpaw immediacy reacted, flinching

and turning around. "Did you just sneeze in my fur?" She asked laughingly. Jadepaw nodded, embarrassed and wished that little wet spot in her fur would go away. Sparkpaw laughed. "Thanks for waking me up. I had a-" A yelp came from outside the den, and Jadepaw ignored it. "I had a horrible dream. It-" a moan of pain echoed in the emptiness of camp, and Jadepaw scrambled out of her nest.

The other apprentices eventually followed, grumbling things like it had been the best rest they had had since they had been apprenticed. Jadepaw fell silent when she saw the scene just outside of the elder's den. Pondnose was twitching on the ground, foam trickling from her jaws. "Moonrise! Adderjaw!" Jadepaw sprinted into the medicine cat den faster than she had ever ran before. Inside, Moonrise had fallen asleep next to Tawny, and gentle snores drifted into the den. "Wake up! Wake up! Pondnose is sick!" Jadepaw yelled, and Tawny stirred in his nest before drifting back into sleep.

"WAKE UP!" Adderjaw came bolting into Jadepaw's line of sight, his fur sticking up. Moonrise perked her ears and sat bolt upright in her-no, Tawny's- nest. They didn't ask questions, they just padded hurriedly out of the den, and took off when they saw Pondnose sprawled in front of her den. Jadepaw had been to busy to notice the bile rising in her throat, staring at the most horrid thing she had ever seen in her tiny eight-mooned life. Pondnose was squirming and moaning on the moss, a mouse at her paws.

Jadepaw shuddered and watched helplessly. She wished that she could help, even Amber was knelt down beside her, rapidly passing Adderjaw the plants he was describing to her. Pondnose hissed in pain, and the noise faded away slowly. Jadepaw knew she was dying, and so did Riverrush. He was pacing back and forth as close as he could get to her. "Breath," He murmured, maybe to himself. She stilled. Her flanks froze. A gasp caught in Jadepaw's throat, and she almost choked. *Is she dead?*

Hair was raised on her spine. She *was* dead. For a moment, everything just faded away from Jadepaw, except for the thought of her mother. She had only knew Dewstorm for a few moments, but she had curled her tail around Jadepaw so tight to her siblings all

she could do was squirm....she had loved Jadepaw. Jadepaw wondered what it was like, to just remember your mom's voice, even if she was dead, to remember her last words and to know that they loved you. To truly *remember* them and know what they were like.

Jadepaw had been told Dewstorm's personality, but no cat except for Dewstorm herself could tell Jadepaw how much she had *really* loved her. When Jadepaw tried to go to sleep, she tried to imagine how beautiful Dewstorm was, and her voice. The only problem was, Jadepaw couldn't truly miss a cat she had never known.

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One, two three, four... Jadepaw lost track of the times a cat had told her to stay still, and be patient, and to 'wait your turn.' What was that supposed to mean? Wait until she *died?* That morning was busy, Moonrise busily sorting herbs for the night's vigil, and Adderjaw examining the mouse Pondnose had ate, his forehead knotted in disbelief. The camp was silent except for the occasional whisper and the rustling of dens as cats padded in and out of them.

No training today, a rest day. One in a million. Enjoy. Jadepaw was grumpy, and she didn't even know why. *I don't know, maybe because Pondnose died!* Jadepaw continued her mental argument with herself. She wasn't even able to get along with her conscience! Jadepaw let out a hiss of frustration and dug her claws into the hard ground, still frozen from the night before. It was unbelievable how apprentices could fall silent all at once.

Jadepaw tried to cuff herself around the ear, only achieving to pull a muscle slightly. *They fall silent because a cat died. DIED. DIED. DIED!* Jadepaw pounded this hard into her head, allowing her heart to tie itself into knots for a few moments before untangling it. Drizzlepaw sat down hard beside her. "That was a rough night," He breathed. *A rough night?* "A *rough* night? Are you *kidding?* Pondnose *died* and you're calling that a rough night.?" Jadepaw stared at him in utter disbelief.

Drizzlepaw drew back away from Jadepaw. "So I was a little *casual.* I'm, tired, and so are you, so just *calm down." Calm down? No cat would tell you to calm down if you couldn't breathe! I have a right to be angry, my Clanmate died!* He sounded like he didn't even care. He

was so *casual*. Drizzlepaw had just plucked away Jadepaw's last nerve. "Are you a mouse-brain, or just a careless fox-heart?" She growled coldly. The instant that she said it, Jadepaw felt a pang of remorse. Drizzlepaw's eyes reflected his hurt feelings, and it raked her heart like a set of razor-sharp claws.

"No, I...not that." "No, it's fine. I'm not either one of those. I'm *Death*paw." He spat out his name like a piece of crow-food, glaring harshly at the ground before blinking his eyes hard and turning around. Jadepaw felt as if she couldn't do anything decent. She slumped. "Ravenstar!" It was Adderjaw's voice. "Look!" Ravenstar turned. "Pondnose died of death berry poisoning." His voice took on an unfamiliar grim tone to it. "I can prove it," he said more quietly as the Clan fell silent as a whole.

"Look-" "We believe you," Ravenstar interrupted him abruptly, his voice cracking slightly. Jadepaw bowed her head, and realization slapped her across the face. *Who would poison an elder's prey? Who would poison anybody's prey?"*

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It was almost exactly like Fernsong's vigil, except it was Pondnose's. "She was a great..." Starlight paused. "Elder. She taught me important life lessons, and she made me a better cat..." He trailed off. Jadepaw felt her throat clog up. Lots of cats had already gone, and Sparkpaw was speaking. "I didn't get to know her long, but when I was little and worried, she would comfort me and calm me down, convincing me that everything was going to be okay." Sparkpaw looked over to her sister and raised a single eyebrow.

"Um..er, her ticks were always very...easy to get off." Despite the solemn mood, Jadepaw let out a small snort, beginning to choke on her saliva. She couldn't breath, and she felt like she needed to stand up to stop coughing. She thought she was coughing internally, until several other cats glared at her. Goldenpaw gave her a look that could kill if it would have been daylight outside. Jadepaw sunk into her pelt as far as she could, wishing that a hole could appear out from under her.

Her fur grew hot. Sunray sat up straighter and seemed to be trying to look Pondnose in the eye. She stared back blankly, and Jadepaw

shuddered. Jadepaw's turn. "Pondnose was kind to me...kind to every cat...and she gave me wisdom. She made me stronger, and she made me understand that some things happen for a reason. But I don't see why she had to die." Jadepaw quieted. *There isn't a reason.*

Dark Skies- #2 Book in Sunrise

Chapter 10
"I wonder who killed her," Jadepaw murmured, almost to herself. Cloudpaw scoffed. "Nobody had to kill her," "She was killed by *deathberries,* somebody had to put them there." Jadepaw insisted. "No, maybe the mouse ate deathberries." "But they were whole berries!" Cloudpaw sighed. "Okay, then who would kill her?" "I don't know, I was asking you!" Cloudpaw pulled in front of her to the border where the other apprentices were marking it. Hawkpaw glared at her, turning away from Jadepaw.
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Jadepaw was lying down in the grass, licking her paws and grimacing. *Tick duty....*she swallowed. Why didn't she remember that she had just had *tick duty?* She flicked her tongue in and out rapidly, trying to get the taste of mouse-bile out of her mouth. Outside the nursery, Creamcall lay in the grass, her belly bulging. Drizzlepaw was sitting next to Cloudpaw....and Frostfang. *What a kit!* Jadepaw looked around her. *Well, I'm sitting by myself.* She sank into her pelt. She felt lonely. Sun warmed her pelt, but the sun wasn't much of a friend to her. Sparkpaw was sitting with her siblings, and Jadepaw really didn't want to sit with Hawkpaw *or* Goldenpaw.

Jadepaw watched Fireclaw and Yellowstone sharing tongues, gnawing an her prey absently. A jet black pelt blocked her view of them, and Jadepaw looked up into Ravenstar's emerald eyes. "Hey, want to train?" "Um....er, sure.. what are we doing?" Jadepaw would do anything no to have to sit her being lonely. "Finish your mouse." Ravenstar said excitedly, his tail swooshing back and forth across the GreenLeaf grass. Jadepaw ripped into it, she was almost finished. Ravenstar waited beside Jadepaw impatiently.

Jadepaw squirmed under Ravenstar's gaze, which was flicking between the entrance and her. Jadepaw finished the mouse, tossing it aside. "So, what are we going to do?" "Hunting." "Oh. Why?"

"Because you need to become a good warrior." "Oh." Jadepaw felt her tail droop. "Can we please do something else? Like tree-climbing?" Ravenstar narrowed his eyes. "Oh, okay. Let's tree-climb." *Maybe he isn't so bad.* Jadepaw hopped up and hurried after Ravenstar, who was already heading towards the entrance of camp.

"Okay, let's get this over with." Ravenstar grumbled, looking up at a very tall tree. The branches stretched out, shadowing the other trees, making them appear puny. Dark green leaves were sprouting off of tiny limbs farther from the bottom of the tree. Ravenstar dug his claws into the trunk and sprang his hind legs up. *This is going to be great.* "Follow my movement." Ravenstar instructed her. So Jadepaw dug her claws into the bark. Luckily it was soft and her claws sunk into the wood easily.

She clambered up the tree, looking at the branch above her where Ravenstar was perching. She hauled herself onto the branch, panting. "Good job." He praised her, getting ready to spring onto another one. Jadepaw sighed heavily. "How...many...branches....will we...climb?" She breathed. "Until we can see the whole camp." Ravenstar said happily. "Can't we see camp from..." She paused to catch her breath. "The ground?" Ravenstar shook his head. "Nope." Jadepaw hauled herself up to another branch, all of her muscles screaming for her to stop.

So, maybe she wasn't the most *fit* cat in ThunderClan, but she wasn't Goldenpaw. She was panting by the time Jadepaw reached about twenty fox-lengths from the ground. "Isn't..this h-high en-ough?" Jadepaw stuttered nervously. "I can't see the whole camp from here," Ravenstar said. *Is this the only thing that he actually enjoys doing?* "Okay, are you....good at this?" "Yeah." Jadepaw trembled, reaching for a branch just above her.

Her front paws were barley on the branch, and her hind paws couldn't quite reach it. Her belly felt like it was flying, and she was dangling in space. "Ravenstar, help!" Ravenstar turned around. "I'm coming..." He said, climbing cautiously down a few branches. Her hind paws were slipping, and she dug her claws in harder to the branch, and they felt like they were being pulled out. "RAVENSTAR!!! I'M FALLING!!!!!!" She whimpered. "I'm here." He meowed. "Jump up," "WHAT??? I can't jump! My legs aren't on the

log-branch anymore!"

Ravenstar groaned and fixed his jaws into Jadepaw's scruff. "Hld rn." He mumbled through her fur. He dug in his jaws, and Jadepaw yelped. "Hold on!" She screeched. She was dangling in midair, and Ravenstar didn't stop. He was hauling her off of the branch, and Jadepaw's heart pounded in her throat. She dug her claws in hard into the branch that Ravenstar dropped her onto. "Thank-" Ravenstar slipped over the edge of the branch. His legs hung over the side of it. "Um..." She said panicked-like.

She dug her jaws into Ravenstar's scruff, and that's when it happened. Ravenstar fell off of the branch, and Jadepaw's neck was jerked forward. She couldn't help but let go before her teeth got ripped out. Ravenstar plummeted to the ground with a sickening *crack* following him. Jadepaw shuddered and leaped down from the branches a fourth as fast as she had climbed up. "Ravenstar! I'm here!" Ravenstar groaned. "Okay, I'll be right back!" Jadepaw hurried away towards camp, luckily it wasn't that far.

Jadepaw burst into camp, screeching for help. "Adderjaw! Moonrise! Anybo-" "What's wrong?" Bristlefur asked soothingly. "He-he-fell off...and he needs Adderjaw!" "Who? Where? Adderjaw! Moonrise!" "The...the..trees..Raven-" "What's wrong?" Moonrise panted beside Adderjaw. "Ravenstar feel near a tree!" Jadepaw pelted out of the entrance, leading the way to Ravenstar. She ignored the bushes she was pushing through and kept running. "Ravenstar!" A small groan answered her.

"Over here!" Jadepaw didn't know why she was calling, Bristlefur, Adderjaw, and Moonrise were right next to her. Moonrise rushed over to him. The most disturbing thing about Ravenstar's position was his leg. It was twisted to an angle, facing his head. A pure white bone jutted out of his joint, not even a drop of blood anywhere in sight. "It's an internal injury," Adderjaw murmured. Jadepaw felt her heart jump into her throat, refusing to come back down. *An internal injury?*
Jadepaw didn't know much, but she knew that they could lead to an infection. Infections could kill. Ravenstar was hurried back to camp by the warriors-all Jadepaw could do was stand behind. *I shouldn't have let go....if I really had tried, I probably cold have held him.* The

one day Ravenstar decided to be kind to her, he got seriously injured. Jadepaw gasped. *What if Ravenstar loses his last life? Then I would be killing the leader of ThunderClan! I'd be a murderer!*

I don't want to be a murderer....everybody wold hate me, and I'd be the cat that killed their own mentor and leader! That's probably why leaders don't mentor cats..... Jadepaw snapped herself out of her thoughts, and she remembered that Ravenstar needed her help. "Oh my StarClan!" Sparrowflight yelped, following them into camp. "Lightningstrike! Clawbark! Twitchheart!" Jadepaw tried to squirm out of everybody's point of view, not wanting to be noticed. "Jadepaw! What happened?" *Thanks a lot, Clearpaw.* Clearpaw abandoned his prey, hurrying in her direction.

"What happened?" He repeated himself. "He fell." "From where?" "A tree." Clearpaw persisted on asking questions. "How did he fall?" "He slipped." Cloudpaw now stood beside Jadepaw, but Drizzlepaw hung back a few tail-lengths. "What's wrong with Ravenstar?" He glanced over to the middle of camp, where Adderjaw had dropped him to take a break. Moonrise was prodding his leg gently, probably trying to discover where it was fractured; or broken. "Is he dead?"

"How am I supposed to know?" "You were there, weren't you?" Jadepaw looked warily at Drizzlepaw and Goldenpaw, who were a good few tail-lengths away from her, but obviously eavesdropping. Jadepaw dropped her voice just to annoy them. "Yeah, but I'm not a medicine cat." "What was Ravenstar doing in a tree? Chasing a squirrel?" Jadepaw shook her head. "Teaching me to climb a tree," She murmured into her chest fur.

"What?" "Teaching me to tree climb." Jadepaw said a little louder, eying Drizzlepaw, who was leaning in, cocking his ear toward her. "Huh?" "He was teaching me how to climb a tree!" Jadepaw grumbled, annoyed that her friends couldn't hear her literally a mouse-length away from her face. "Oh, that was nice of him." Sparkpaw said awkwardly. "Yeah, the *only* nice thing he's done for me." "I heard he's on his last life," Hawkpaw said. Jadepaw spun around. She didn't realize Hawkpaw was there.

"Who is?" Clearpaw asked. He clearly wasn't listening. "Ravenstar, you mouse-brain!" Sparkpaw pointed out what was supposed to be

the obvious. "I'm no more of a mouse-brain than you!" Clearpaw glared at his sister. "Hey, be nice." Jadepaw never knew Hawkpaw was such a peace-keeper. At least between his littermates. "So," Cloudpaw said. "What if Ravenstar was on his last life?" "I'd be a murderer." Jadepaw whispered to herself, to inaudible for any other cat to hear.

"Then we'd get a new leader- Flipstar!" Sparkpaw said excitedly. "You act like you don't care much about Ravenstar." Hawkpaw said disapprovingly. "Well, I know I don't after the torment he's put *Deathpaw* through." Cloudpaw grumbled. Drizzlepaw perked his ears. Jadepaw agreed, but she was in no mood to express her love and care for her littermates. "*I* like Ravenstar." Clearpaw said. At least one cat defended Ravenstar. Ravenstar *could* be kind to others. Jadepaw wondered if Ravenstar was nicer when Dewstorm was an apprentice.

The group of apprentices dispersed, and Jadepaw was left alone near the entrance of camp. She sighed heavily. Ravenstar had been moved into the medicine cat den, and nothing stained the grass, it was bright green and clear of blood. Jadepaw shuddered. *Ravenstar's probably bleeding on the inside.* Sometimes Jadepaw impressed herself at how much knowledge she had about medicine. *And it's all my fault!* Jadepaw peeked inside the medicine cat den.

Tawny was sleeping in a nest close to the entrance. He inhaled deeply and exhaled slowly, shifting every so often. Ravenstar was sprawled in his nest, also, writhing in pain while Moonrise wrapped what looked like a leaf around his leg tightly. Ravenstar groaned, but didn't protest. Adderjaw had his forehead wrinkled, looking over from her stock of herbs to Ravenstar, who's bottom teeth were jutting out from above his upper lip.

Jadepaw shuddered. *Did I break his jaw, too?* Jadepaw felt horrible. She should've just held on, but he had been so heavy.... A white pelt flashed by, Jadepaw almost didn't catch it. "Wait, Cloudpaw!" Cloudpaw turned around, his white tail swooshing across the ground. "What?" Jadepaw needed to tell some cat. "I need to tell you something." "Good, I need to ask you something." Cloudpaw sighed. He stared at her imploringly. "Okay, you go first." Jadepaw sighed.

"What's wrong with you and Drizzlepaw?" He asked. "Nothing, he's just mad at me. So-" "Does he have a reason to leave?" Cloudpaw interrupted rudely. Jadepaw flashed him a glare. "Yes, er, no, I apologized!" "What did you do to him? I've never seen him this upset since Goldenpaw beat him up in battle training!" "Okay, so, I was really tired after Pondnose's vigil, and I was alone, and it was a sad day. I was up-" Cloudpaw gave her a get-to-the-point glare.

"And he said it was a 'rough night'!" "So...?" "I got mad and insulted him." Jadepaw said shortly. "W-" Jadepaw cut him off. "N-np-nnnnnnn-" "What did-" "Nooo..." Jadepaw continued to cut him off. "What did you say?" Cloudpaw asked quickly, before Jadepaw could cut him off. "Nothing too bad..." "Why did you insult him?" "Because he made me *mad!* He didn't even seem to care that Pondnose died!" Jadepaw did a lousy job of defending herself. She sighed, just *knowing* that Cloudpaw would take sides with Drizzlepaw, just because he was named Deathpaw. It was just a name!

"Maybe he just doesn't want to show he's upset, but, of course he's upset!" Jadepaw knew it. "You *always* defend him. If he fails his assessment, you'll just do it over for him!" She fumed. "I do not, he would not, and I would NOT!" Cloudpaw turned tail, heading towards the apprentice den where Drizzlepaw was lounging. Jadepaw rolled her eyes and frowned at him.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 11

Jadepaw raised a single eyebrow at Lightningstrike. "So *you're* going to be my mentor..." She meowed, hope edging its way into her voice. "Yes," Lightningstrike replied excitedly. "Don't you have to mentor Sparkpaw?" "Oh, yeah, I'm going to mentor her after you." "Cool! Ravenstar was teaching me how to climb trees." Lightningstrike drew back. "Well, I'm going to teach you about the Warrior Code." "But-" "No protests." "But I know the rules!" Jadepaw whined. "Okay, what are they?" Lightningstrike inquired. "Um... don't kill cats...don't eat prey before the elders...don't-"

"Queens." "Huh?" "Don't eat prey before the elders and queens have had their meal." Jadepaw gave a dismissive flick of her tail. "Mouse, rat, same thing." Lightningstrike eyed her, amused. "No, they are not the same thing. One is-" "I don't really care. Let's do the Warrior Code." Jadepaw really wasn't up to dealing with a know-it-all right now. Lightningstrike simply nodded and began to lead her out of camp. "Wait, why are we leaving camp to learn the warrior code?"

"So we can be in touch with the inner spirits of our surroundings." Lightningstrike scoffed. "Really?" Jadepaw widened her eyes sarcastically. "No, silly, we're leaving so you can be focused. Away from all distractions. Including Clearpaw." Lightningstrike nudged her, and Jadepaw almost choked. "What? No? Clearpaw isn't-" "I see how you look at him," It was Jadepaw's turn to scoff. "More like the way *he* looks at *me*."

"No, you look at him like this." Lightningstrike rounded her bright green eyes and batted her lashes wildly, making it look like she had gotten something in her eye. "Uh....okay...What are we learning?" "The Warrior Code." "What code?" "All of them." Lightningstrike seemed to realize that Jadepaw was about to send all of the birds in ThunderClan territory flying into ShadowClan camp, because she stopped her teasing just in time.

"Code number One," She prompted. "Defend your Clan with your life. Make sure that your loyalties always lie with your Clan." Jadepaw recited it almost perfectly, and she was rewarded with a curt nod from Lightningstrike. "Code number Two," "Don't hunt or trespass on another Clan's territory." Another nod.
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That's how Jadepaw wasted her morning. Well, at least Jadepaw thought so. Sparkpaw was now being trained by Lightningstrike, and Cloudpaw and Drizzlepaw weren't speaking to her. Jadepaw felt very alone, and it didn't help that half the camp was hiding out in their den. It had began to sprinkle rain outside, but Jadepaw sat next to Highrock. Rain had began to run down her forehead onto her front paws. She shivered from the cold, rain running down her skin.

A puddle of water swelled in between her front paws, but she didn't really mind that much. She was as wet as can be, and if she didn't shift her position, the wind didn't penetrate her pelt. It was really quite comfortable, almost as good as a nest. Well, it *was* comfortable, then a warm and dry pelt pushed up against her wet fur. "Wow, it's wet out here." Starlight murmured. Jadepaw let out a loud, heavy breath. "You're wet," Starlight commented.

"Why aren't you in your den? Whitecough is easy to catch in the cold." "Then why have I not seen any cat with Whitecough?" "Because they don't soak in the rain," Starlight replied sarcastically. "What's wrong?" He asked. "Nothing. Why do you ask?" Jadepaw replied. "You're real grumpy. More than usual." "Are you saying I'm usually grumpy?" Jadepaw let out a low growl. "No, um. No. Yes. Get out of the rain!" As if on cue, it started pouring rain.

Sparkpaw and Lightningstrike sprinted into camp, rain streaming down from their pelts. Sparkpaw's brown and white pelt sagged from the weight of the water. Jadepaw dragged herself up, and she was right. The wind rushed under her pelt to her belly fur, and her legs quivered. Her skin got goosebumps all over it, making her fur standing on end. It wasn't easy for Jadepaw to dry off, but after soaking on the ground next to her nest and cleaning herself, her pelt puffed back out.

Sparkpaw lied lazily in her nest, one paw draping over the edge

limply. "So, did *you* kill Pondnose?" Clearpaw asked Goldenpaw for the thousandth time. "No, why would I? And why in StarClan would a cat admit they killed a cat? That's just plain mouse-brained!" She had finally lost her temper, and her golden eyes blazed with irritation. Clearpaw just let the outburst bounce off, moving on to Sparkpaw.

Jadepaw knew for a fact that none of the apprentices even knew where deathberries grew, and not even Goldenpaw would poison an elder. Sparkpaw shook her head tiredly. "No, Clearpaw. No, I didn't." She was drifting off into sleep, and Jadepaw couldn't really blame her. Some wind found its way through the gap in the den, but, with seven cats sitting snug inside, it was really quite cozy.

The rain pattered above them, but there was no threat of it leaking in. The den was made of tightly woven reeds and other plants, there were at least four layers to it. Sparkpaw had her head resting over her white paws, her eyelids drooping, and every once in a while they would close all the way, only for Sparkpaw to blink them open. She stretched her jaws into a yawn which made no sound, just showing that she was tired.

Jadepaw felt her jaw twitch, but she refused to give in to a yawn. It would only make her more tired. Drizzlepaw yawned, also, and Jadepaw's jaw quivered. Her eyes pooled, and she couldn't help but yawn. Her jaw opened to the point she thought that it would crack from the pressure, and her eyes screwed shut. Tears welled at the corner of her eyes once she opened them. She blinked them away. Hawkpaw and Sparkpaw had fallen asleep, and their flanks rose and fell together. Synchronized breathing overcame the noise of the rain, and Jadepaw let herself drift off into sleep.

The land here was like no other, and blue water lapped at her paws. Jadepaw soaked there for a moment, taking in her surroundings. The sun shone bright onto her back, making her wish she had a lighter colored pelt. Dirt shifted easily under her paws, but it wasn't mud, even though it was wet. It felt good on her hardened pads, Jadepaw usually had to walk on rocky ground. The strange dirt covered the area as far as Jadepaw could see, making her feel like she was on the moor.

But wasn't anything like the moor. The dirt was hot, it didn't have any shade to shelter it from the hot Greenleaf sun. There were no other cats to be seen, just pooled blue water and the occasional tree. Well, maybe they were trees. The trees had rough bark, but there were indentions in the wood ever few mouse-lengths which would make it easier for climbing. Huge green leaves were at the top, way bigger than the beech leaves Moonrise used to carry traveling herbs in.

At the very top of the tree, it bend towards Jadepaw, as if the leaves were too heavy to hold. Jadepaw lifted one of her paws off of the ground, the dirt was scorching her pads. It was strange that she could use her senses in a dream, but she gratefully took in the salty smell the water offered. Her stomach rumbled loudly, reminding her that she had forgotten to eat her meal at sunrise.

Jadepaw didn't want to wake up, she wanted to stay in this paradise forever, where there were no murder mysteries or grudges against one's own littermate. There were no clouds in the blissfully blue sky, but a rumble of thunder sounded anyway. *It's probably just still storming in camp.* A clap of thunder sounded again, then a loud thud. Jadepaw whipped her head from side to side, sending the dirt flying in all directions.

A gray she-cat padded down from the sky, as if there was an invisible slope she was walking on. She had a pelt of stars, shining brighter than any thing Jadepaw had ever seen in her life. Jadepaw's legs trembled, but she willed herself not to awake from this dream. The she-cat was now padding on the same ground Jadepaw did, but she didn't disturb the grainy dirt, and her paws didn't drip water from the lake she had been walking in.

The cat picked up her pace, her long fur swaying from her bounding steps. Jadepaw fell over by surprise when the she-cat rubbed against her, purring. If she didn't touch the dirt, Jadepaw expected her not to be so...so...*solid.* "Oh, sorry!" The she-cat stammered. If this cat was from StarClan, Jadepaw didn't know what to say. She thought they were supposed to be graceful and confident.

The gray she-cat blinked nervously as Jadepaw shakily sat up. "Sorry, sorry. Really..." The she-cat licked her starry but obviously

once-white chest fur. "Oh, Jadepaw! I'm so happy to finally see you!" She purred. Jadepaw stopped, confused. "Um...what, sorry, *who* are you?" The she-cat giggled, then her happy expression faded, as if disappointed that Jadepaw didn't know who she was. Jadepaw straightened. *Should* she know who this cat is?

"I...I'm your mom..D-Dewstorm." The she-cat stammered. Oh. My. StarClan. Jadepaw's heart stopped, and she just stared at Dewstorm, dumbfounded. She took everything about her in. Her voice, it was silky and kind, like a mothers' voice should be. Her long furred pelt, like Cloudpaw's. Her gray pelt with starry white patches. The same shining green eyes Jadepaw saw in herself when she looked into the small pool near her favorite place to hunt.

Jadepaw had the same pelt as her, except for the white patches and the long fur. "I...I.." Jadepaw couldn't make out words. Her throat clogged up, telling her not to speak, allow herself to cry. It was okay. "It's okay, Jadepaw. It's okay." Dewstorm purred these words into her ear, and Jadepaw didn't want to wake up, she didn't want to leave Dewstorm. The problem was, it *wasn't* okay back there, at camp, where a murderer lived and Jadepaw was disliked by most cats, even her siblings.

"Mom," was all she could make out. "Yes, sweetheart?" Dewstorm asked, purring still. "Ravenstar's hurt," "Because of me. He hates me, and so do all of the other apprentices. Starlight only deals with me because he doesn't want you to be mad at him." Dewstorm let out a heavy sigh. "That's not true at all." There was a long pause. "Creamcall's expecting kits," Dewstorm meowed, her muzzle still in Jadepaw's fur.

"I know." "She's having them right now." Dewstorm meowed. "What!?" She jumped up, trying to arouse herself from sleep. "Jadepaw, wait. You can't wake up until I tell you what I came here to tell you." Jadepaw turned towards her mom, who's expression grew grim. "Remember who the villain is, even in their most vulnerable moments. The cat who killed Pondnose is the cat who can kill many more if they so desire to."

Jadepaw didn't say anything. Her jaw hung partly open, and she gawked at her mother as she began fading away. She regained

control over her actions as Dewstorm's fur became transparent. "No!" She rushed towards her. "Please, *please* don't go! I can't wake up! Just let me-" "Shh.." Dewstorm meowed. Her barely visible expression softened. "It's okay."

The second Dewstorm disappeared, Jadepaw was back in the apprentice den. "Cloudpaw! Drizzlepaw! I saw Dew-" The den was empty, and a weak ray of sunlight filtered through the den. Jadepaw padded outside to see a crowd of cats near the nursery. "Creamcall's having her kits!" Cloudpaw called to her excitedly. Jadepaw decided not to say anything about her dream, or that she already knew. They'd think she was crazy.

"Drizzlepaw," "It's okay. Really." Drizzlepaw cut her of before she could even apologize, which she was fine with. Drizzlepaw gave Peppernose a fair amount of room to pace outside the medicine cat den, ready to meet his new kits. "Give him some *privacy!"* Adderjaw yowled to all the onlookers bitterly. With two sick cats, he most likely didn't get enough sleep to be patient and loving.

Adderjaw stormed back into the nursery, and Peppernose tried to glimpse his kits. "Don't even bother looking, they're not even born yet!" Adderjaw growled to Peppernose. Cloudpaw stood, ridged. "That's not good. Creamcall woke us all up around..." He paused. "I don't know. A long time ago." Jadepaw could just hope. And she hoped *hard.* If Creamcall gave birth successfully, then Jadepaw would make the kits her best friends. She knew that Creamcall was Dewstorm's best friend. Why not keep the tradition going?

Jadepaw didn't have time to answer her own question, Creamcall gave a yowl from the medicine cat den. Jadepaw was jolted out of her thoughts. Cloudpaw barreled into her side, letting out a grunt as he fell to the ground. "Ow, Cloudpaw!" Jadepaw cried out. "You just pushed my spine into my rib cage!" "Sorry, sorry, sorry! We're just bored." Cloudpaw pushed himself off of Jadepaw.

Drizzlepaw was standing to the side, looking innocently anywhere except for Jadepaw. She sighed loudly at him. Cloudpaw sent a clump of moss flying through the still damp air. He let out a low cough. Well, they *had* been standing here a while. Her legs were stiff from standing in one spot. Her muscles were taught, and she

couldn't feel her paws. It wasn't necessarily that cold, it was really quite warm outside.

It must be very important to skip a day of duties, the fresh-kill pile wasn't a pile anymore, and it was the middle of Greenleaf. Jadepaw watched Riverrush grab a sparrow from the fresh-kill pile, the last piece. Her stomach growled again. Jadepaw turned towards the camp entrance. She was going to go catch herself a mouse or something.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 12
Three kits, Jadepaw heard. Two she-kits and a tom. Jadepaw didn't get to see them yet, but Peppernose had been boasting all day about how alike they looked to Creamcall. Jadepaw sniffed sharply, and dirt flew up her nose. "Gah!" She screeched. Jadepaw rubbed her nose over her paws roughly. "A..a..a-choo!"

Clearpaw turned around, annoyed. "How many times do you think you have to scare off of the prey before it never comes back?" He growled. He had had his head stuck inside of a hole in the ground. It probably used to be the home of a mole. But now it was deserted. Clearpaw didn't seen to believe that, and he had had his head stuck in there for half of the day.

"Sorry, sorry. It's probably just allergies." Jadepaw apologized. She drew away from where Clearpaw was hunting. She was several tail-lengths away from him, but every once in a while he let out an annoyed grunt. *Sorry!* Jadepaw Parted her jaws slightly, letting scents flow in.

The scent of oak trees overwhelmed the other scents of the forest, though Jadepaw could distinguish the smell of squirrel anywhere. She followed the source of the scent, not even bothering to use her eyes in the process of searching for it. The trees formed a canopy over her head, not allowing much sunlight to filter through their branches.

Speckles of sunlight decorated Clearpaw's pelt. Golden spots of sunlight danced on his thick white pelt, flowing from side to side as the branches swayed in the breeze. Jadepaw let her eyes close. Light gray light was all she could see, but her attention was focused on her other senses. The squirrel was probably storing food for Leaf-Fall, which was already showing itself.

The breeze had became colder, the days seemed to be dragging Jadepaw with them as the extended a little longer, and Jadepaw

had been noticing a decrease in the more delicate herbs in the medicine cat's stores. The prey, though, hadn't began to hide in their dens, and that Jadepaw took advantage of.

She opened her eyes to see that she had weaved her way through a few trees, and Clearpaw was now out of sight. A squirrel perched above, and, just as Jadepaw had suspected, the squirrel was stuffing a store of food into a hollowed out space in a tall oak. Jadepaw hoped that she had learned enough from Ravenstar's tree climbing lesson to catch this squirrel.

Riverrush hadn't been eating much, and he would appreciate this squirrel. The squirrel gave a little chirp to her, thinking that Jadepaw didn't have a chance at catching him. Jadepaw dug her claws into the bark, and fortunately, it was still soft from the recent downpour. Well, everything was wet, she realized.

The bushes glistened with dew, which brought Jadepaw back to Dewstorm. *Remember who the villain is.* Jadepaw eased her grip on the bark and climbed back down. The problem was, she didn't know who the villain was in the first place. *The cat who killed Pondnose is the cat who can kill many more if they desire to.*

Jadepaw shuddered. She wished she could've seen Pondnose in StarClan. To see if cats really did look younger in StarClan. Jadepaw knew that that was probably selfish of her, so she dismissed the thought. The squirrel was long gone by now, so Jadepaw padded towards where Clearpaw was sniffing. "Where were you?" Clearpaw asked. A sparrow lay limp on the ground beside him.

"Hunting." "Oh. Did it get away?" "Yeah, sort of." Clearpaw nodded dismissively. "Do you want to go back to camp?" He asked. Jadepaw nodded. She didn't feel much like hunting. As they began to head back to camp, Jadepaw began to think. There weren't really any suspicious cats in ThunderClan camp, but ShadowClan's the complete opposite.

Even their leader was shady. Well, Ravenstar was kind of suspicious, also. "I think it was Amber," Clearpaw said suddenly, exhaling. "What?" "I think Amber did it. I mean, killed Pondnose."

"Why would she do that? We're caring for her and her friend, too. She has absolutely no reason to." "Think about it. The middle of the night after the Gathering, Pondnose...Pondnose...died."

"Amber, Tawny, Creamcall, Adderjaw, and Moonrise were the only cats in camp, and Adderjaw, Moonrise, and Tawny were in the medicine cat den, and Creamcall was in the nursery. Amber had some free time in camp, enough time to poison prey." Jadepaw let out a snort. "That doesn't even make sense, and it doesn't answer my question."

Besides her dismissive tone, Clearpaw's theory made sense, and it unnerved her. "She's a rouge, she doesn't have to have a reason. It's not like she's going to stay after the medicine cats heal Tawny," "Well, they could." Jadepaw murmured quietly, squeezing between two bramble bushes. Clearpaw fell silent, as though realizing that he couldn't win with her.

After trekking through the woods in silence for a while, Clearpaw spoke up. "Okay, if Amber didn't do it, then who did?" Jadepaw let out a heavy sigh. "I don't know! Why does this matter so much to you?" Clearpaw's expression grew grim. "Because we have a murderer in our camp."

. . .

Jadepaw padded cautiously into camp. After their *talk,* she didn't feel too safe in her own camp. She looked over to Fireclaw, who was sharing tongues with Yellowstone. He didn't seem like the bad kind of cat, and he wasn't vulnerable. Jadepaw looked at Sparrowflight, and instantly eliminated her from her mental list of suspects. Sparrowflight was Dewstorm's apprentice, she would never do anything bad.

Jadepaw's gaze traveled to Riverrush, who was staring sadly at the mouse that Drizzlepaw had gave to him earlier. Her heart melted at his sadness. An elder wouldn't kill another elder, and, Riverrush hadn't ate hardly anything since Pondnose's death, only enough to keep him from starving.

Jadepaw felt her heart sink. Every cat in camp was good, she couldn't find out who had killed Pondnose even if she had nine lives to do so. Jadepaw sought out Amber, who could be anywhere in

camp. She just wanted to see her. Jadepaw caught a red pelt underneath the cover of a tree. Amber was lying there with her head in her paws.

"Oh, hey, Jadepaw." Jadepaw loved Amber's voice, which sounded like a new queen's voice. It was soft and kind, but Jadepaw knew it could grow stern if need be. Most cats would think that Amber's voice made her sound soft, but Jadepaw thought it made her sound protective and strong. Jadepaw wondered if her voice would change when she got older.

"Hi." When Jadepaw drew closer, she noticed how thin and frail Amber seemed. "Why don't you eat something?" Amber shrugged. "It just doesn't feel right taking your Clan's hospitality for granted. I didn't catch it, so I don't eat it." Jadepaw couldn't see how Clearpaw suspected this cat of murder.

"Oh." Jadepaw paused. "Then why don't you hunt yourself?" Amber seemed to think about this for a moment before sadly shaking her head. "I couldn't. It's your territory that you fought for, I can't take your prey." Jadepaw sighed and sat down beside her. "We'll have to leave once Tawny's healed. If he gets healed." She added darkly.

What if Tawny doesn't get better? "Why do you have to go?" "Because, I can't bare to take things that aren't mine. Even with permission, it makes me feel guilty." It was hard to believe that this was the same cat that tackled her and kept her prisoner so she could help Tawny. *I guess she just really cares for him.* Jadepaw sat there quietly.

Amber's silky red fur brushed against hers, and Jadepaw realized how much Amber had shrank in the past few moons. Jadepaw glanced at Amber's glistening yellow eyes, which were staring at the ground. An idea sparked inside of her, lighting her mind up.

She sat up and left, not really bothering to say goodbye. Flipnose was pacing around in camp, maybe going over the dawn patrols. "Hello, Jadepaw." He greeted her and turned away. Jadepaw followed him, keeping pace with his random path. "Um, Flipnose, can I talk to you?" "Not right now, sweetheart."

Jadepaw rolled her eyes and wished that she was a bit bigger and

Flipnose was way smaller. Despite Flipnose's medium built, he was way bigger than her. Jadepaw was small, and Flipnose was like a combination of a WindClan cat, a ThunderClan cat, and a ShadowClan cat.

Flipnose was muscular with long legs and he was *fat.* "No, it's really important," "Umhmph," Flipnose murmured, veering away from her. "No, really!" "Sweetie, please-" "*Please* don't call me sweetheart." Jadepaw said, frustrated. Jadepaw realized how small she really was. Her legs weren't necessarily short, but they weren't long.

She had a very small build, despite her excelling at her battle skills. Her sparkling green eyes were barely visible from behind her wide pupils. Her whole pelt was gray, and her short fur didn't make her look any bigger. Her paws were just a bit bigger than a new apprentice's. The point was, Jadepaw was very tiny.

Jadepaw followed Flipnose, who had purposely steered away from her. "Hey, you're not even doing anything!" She called, but she knew Flipnose wouldn't listen to her right now. Jadepaw had been planning on asking Flipnose to make her a warrior. She sighed. He probably wouldn't have agreed, anyway.

Adderjaw was padding towards the recently-replenished fresh-kill pile. "Oh, Adderjaw!" Jadepaw circled around back towards him. Adderjaw dipped his head and acknowledged her. "Yes?" "How's Tawny doing?" Jadepaw asked him. Her spine tingled uncomfortably as Adderjaw gave him this questioning look, like; *don't you want to know about Ravenstar?* "Er, and Ravenstar."

Adderjaw gave her a tiny nod of consent. "Well, Ravenstar has a broken leg...and a cracked spine. His right leg is broken and has a nasty cut that could easily become infected." Jadepaw felt her heart jump into her throat, and her stomach filled the space her heart had been.

Jadepaw felt horrible guilt eat up her insides, and she felt like it was all her fault that Ravenstar had fallen. "So...he's not doing too good right now. And Tawny...well, we don't know what's wrong with him. He's been vomiting blood, and he's been having horrible chest pains. It's like we can't diagnose him with a single treatment,

so we're trying different herbs on him."

"Why are you telling me this?" "Well, I figure that we need all the prayers we can get, and I can't keep a secret." Adderjaw offered her a small wink. Jadepaw didn't know Adderjaw *could* wink. Jadepaw was bewildered by his sudden cheerfulness, though, she was glad that at least one cat could be happy.
. . .
"....and we saw this beautiful clearing! Sunlight leaked through a gap in the overhead canopy, and not a single thing was out of place! Birds of all kinds circled just below the trees, as if trying to find a way out. Lightningstrike wouldn't let me catch one, though, so I didn't bring any back."

Sparkpaw was a really good story teller, but the sun hadn't emerged from behind the clouds in two sunrises, and birds don't circle unless they were hawks. Though, once, Riverrush had told her a tale which described a huge bird called an eagle sweep up a blind *and* deaf kit.

Jadepaw shuddered. She was glad that she wasn't blind. Jadepaw lead Sparkpaw along, encouraging her to finish her story. "And..and...then a pack of foxes attacked us! They were huge! And quick. They snapped at me and Lightningstrike, but I managed-" Lightningstrike was observing from behind them.

"Well, it wasn't quite like that. Sun did filter through an impressive canopy of trees, and a few sparrows were fighting over a worm.." Jadepaw let out a snort. Sparkpaw sunk into her pelt. "I would have let Sparkpaw climb a tree and snatch one, but last time that happened, she fell right out of it. Luckily she wasn't very high up."

An image of Ravenstar slipping from that tree branch flashed through her mind. "We smelled a stale scent of fox, but not from your lifetime!" Jadepaw burst out laughing, mainly because of how exaggerated Sparkpaw's version of the story was. "But," Lightningstrike attempted to make Jadepaw stop laughing.

"But," Jadepaw stopped laughing. "But, Sparkpaw *does* make a really good storyteller. You'll make an interesting elder." Lightningstrike looked meaningfully at Sparkpaw, and Jadepaw couldn't help but

chuckle. Sparkpaw flashed Jadepaw a joking glare. Jadepaw grinned at Sparkpaw and turned towards the camp entrance.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 13

Ravenstar most surely wasn't better. Jadepaw observed this silently from outside the medicine cat den. Ravenstar had been injured for a few sunrises now, but his rapid downhill spiral from injured to hopelessly broken made it seem longer. "Hello, Jadepaw!" Lightningstrike called to her.

Jadepaw jumped away from the den. "Oh, hi! What do you want?" Lightningstrike flicked her orange tail. "I don't want anything. Me and Sparkpaw were just going to do some battle training. Would you like to come?" Jadepaw nodded, glad Lightningstrike either didn't notice her peeking into the den or she didn't care.

Jadepaw didn't notice Sparkpaw, who was waiting impatiently behind Lightningstrike. Jadepaw hadn't been battle training in several sunrises, and she was eager to get up and stretch her muscles. The sun had already rose high up into the sky, and its warmth warded off any lurking cold.

Jadepaw's fur had long since grown thick, and her pelt burned. She had grown envious of Lightningstrike's weirdly-thin fur, though she knew that during Leaf-Bare Lightningstrike would be freezing her pelt off, and cats like Jadepaw would be slightly less freezing.

Jadepaw watched Sparkpaw and Lightningstrike, who were now discussing different terms and battle moves. She didn't feel like she belonged beside them, and she hung about three tail-lengths behind them. Jadepaw wished that she and Ravenstar could get along this well, but there was absolutely no hope of that after Jadepaw practically pushed him out of a tree.

Ravenstar probably hated her more than ever now, and, unless his head got a bump on it, he wasn't going to act any nicer. Ravenstar had one life left, and if she killed the Clan leader on his last life, not even Drizzlepaw would speak to her. She would be an outcast, only good for being sent on hunting patrols.

Jadepaw may even be exiled if Flipstar, the new leader felt like it. If he had the chance to, he probably *would* exile her. Jadepaw knew that she could be annoying and rude, and she wasn't the best hunter in ThunderClan. If they couldn't use her, and with the crime that Jadepaw had commented, she'd be a loner.

Even the unseen and unheard groups only heard in the elder's tales, like BloodClan, won't turn her away. Nobody wants a cat who turns on her friends. Even though, technically, Ravenstar wasn't a friend. Jadepaw mentally cuffed herself over her ear. Now she was thinking illy of the injured. Worse, her leader!

If she could find a band of rouges that hadn't heard of her horrible crime, they'd soon send her away when they realized that Jadepaw didn't have the skills to provide for them. Well, she'd just be Jade. Jade was pretty, sort of. Jadepaw would have to live far away from the Clans, and maybe find herself a kind twoleg...

Jadepaw was pulled from her self-pity thoughts when they finally arrived at the training grounds. Lightningstrike gave them a small amount of time to prepare. "Hey, Jadepaw, show me what you've got!" Sparkpaw challenged. "Um...okay." Sparkpaw hesitated to start the fight, as if afraid that she would damage Jadepaw's *brittle bones.*

Sparkpaw, unlike Jadepaw, had a naturally large frame and seemed to be more muscular than Jadepaw. Jadepaw was actually highly skilled at fighting, but she had never trained with Sparkpaw before. Jadepaw sprang at Sparkpaw, landing on her back. Sparkpaw's legs buckled, like she hadn't expected Jadepaw to come on with such force.

Jadepaw clambered off of Sparkpaw, who was still face planted into the ground. Jadepaw stuck her neck out cautiously. *Did I just kill another Clanmate?* She thought with horror. Sparkpaw bolted up, sliding swiftly underneath Jadepaw's belly fur. With sheathed claws, Sparkpaw pummeled Jadepaw's stomach.

Jadepaw rolled over until she was back onto her paws, whereas Sparkpaw was still struggling to sit up. In a flash, Jadepaw barreled into Sparkpaw, careful not to crush anywhere Sparkpaw had so carelessly exposed. With an "Omph", Sparkpaw went down onto the

ground. With her hind paws planted firmly into the ground, Jadepaw stood over Sparkpaw, who was making futile attempts to push her off.

Despite their height difference, Jadepaw stood over Sparkpaw until Sparkpaw's rapid pummeling slowed. Jadepaw's heart had long ago slowed down, but Sparkpaw's was still thumping quickly against Jadepaw's chest. Jadepaw stepped out from over her, and watched triumphantly as Sparkpaw just lye there, exhausted.

Jadepaw looked up at Lightningstrike, who's jaws were slightly parted. "Wow, Jadepaw, just wow." Sparkpaw shook out her fur, embarrassed. Jadepaw looked at the ground and felt her pelt grow hot. "You just dominated-sorry Sparkpaw- a cat almost twice your size!" It was true, Jadepaw was small and Sparkpaw was huge and fully-grown.

"Where did you learn to fight like that?" Lightningstrike asked, astounded. "Um, Ravenstar." Sparkpaw let out a heavy puff of air and tried to act like the combat wasn't a big deal. To Jadepaw, it was. She let out a heavy sigh. That's one thing that makes her worth something. "I forgot Ravenstar was your mentor," Sparkpaw murmured, managing to make it sound like a bad thing, or an unfair advantage.

Lightningstrike seemed to have gotten over her surprise, because she announce the battle moves that they would be practicing to perfection until the sun went down.
. . .
Battle training had finally ended, and the sun was almost finished sinking down behind the vast forest of trees. Sparkpaw pulled up next to Jadepaw and gave her an expectant look. "What?" Jadepaw finally asked after a while of ignoring Sparkpaw's stare. Sparkpaw practically exploded in her face. "What? How could you?" "How could I *what*?"

"How could you beat me?" Sparkpaw demanded. "It's one of the things I'm good at. Ravenstar practically only teaches me battle moves-" "No, why did you beat me?" "Because you didn't beat me," Jadepaw replied defensively. Sparkpaw glared at her. "I thought we were friends!" She hissed. Jadepaw straighened, trying to look as

big as she could.

"We are friends! Why are you so upset?" Sparkpaw lost all of her composure and attacked her with a stream of scalding-hot words. "I *thought* we were friends, but and then you go all out and try to impress Lightningstrike, *my* mentor! I thought we were just going to practice some battle moves on each other, but-"

Jadepaw interrupted. "We *were* practicing battle moves on each other, and don't try to act like I'm the only one that was trying to do a little scrimmage, because you're bigger and stronger than me, and you were doing your best to beat me! You-" "That was one of the only things I had!" "What do you mean *had?* And fighting was *not* one of the only things you have!"

"You have a mother, and supportive siblings, and you're strong, and your mentor-" "Just shut up!" Sparkpaw hissed. "Oh, no, I won't *now*. You just got me started! My mother *died* before I even got to know her!" Sparkpaw's piercing glare faltered for a moment, and an expression of pity flickered on her face before being replaced by her hateful glare once again.

"And I have to have a fake mother-" "*Foster* mother. And you're lucky to have my mom! She's better than Dewstorm would have ever been!" Jadepaw's heart split right down the middle. *Nobody* says anything bad about Dewstorm! "My mom-" "Do you have any *idea* how it feels to have to share a mom with another family of-"

"No, I don't have a single morsel of an idea how that feels. I don't *have* a mom! I'd share my mother with a hundred other kits if it meant that I could have known her, and she would be here today!" Jadepaw dashed away from Sparkpaw, and she let out a shriek of frustration as Sparkpaw called behind her, "You don't mean that! You *don't* mean-" her voice faded away as Jadepaw gained distance.

Jadepaw stopped and slowly took in shuddering breaths. She knew she needed to calm down, but she couldn't forget so fast about Sparkpaw's cutting words. She looked around at her surroundings only to find that she was sitting near a small stream. Water trickled over a few rocks, but it wasn't exactly calming.

The stones jutted out of the water, and the water was tinged brown, most likely from dirt being kicked into it. At least the sound of the stream wasn't messed up. Jadepaw inhaled slowly, taking in the scents of the forest. A mouse was somewhere nearby, but Jadepaw didn't feel much like catching it.

Jadepaw could smell maple trees, lots of maple trees. She lay her head in her paws, watching the sun set. *The sun's setting!* Jadepaw sat upright in her spot. She'd be in real trouble if she wasn't back before dark, and it had already happened many times before.

She'd have a lot of explaining to do, and saying that 'I had a fight with Sparkpaw and she made me upset.' Wasn't enough. Jadepaw let out a huge breath and began pelting through the forest. She ducked under low hanging branches and leaped over a small bush, part of a row of them blocking her path.

Jadepaw cast a glance towards the sky, which was turning a deep shade of red. She pushed her muscles to their limits to arrive before the sun set, but she was at camp in a few mere seconds. Jadepaw guessed that she wasn't as far from camp as she had expected. She sat behind a bramble bush quietly, breathing slowly.

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Jadepaw sat down on the opposite side of the apprentice den from Sparkpaw. It was a cool night, but the wind wasn't very cold, just enough to send chills down Jadepaw's spine. The moss crinkled as Jadepaw shifted into a sleeping position, and she resolved to replace the moss in her nest the next morning.

Jadepaw stretched her stiff muscles. Her muscles begged for her to just go to sleep already, but no matter how many times she changed her position, she couldn't drift into sleep. Jadepaw screwed her eyes shut, willing herself not to open them until the sun had risen again.

Jadepaw took in a lung full of air and yawned. "Jadepaw, you're awake?" Drizzlepaw murmured from his nest. His eyes glittered in the darkness, like he was crying. "Yeah, I can't sleep." Jadepaw complained quietly. "Me neither." Drizzlepaw sat up in his nest, and Jadepaw did the same. In advance, she knew that they should leave the den in order to avoid waking the other apprentices.

"Jadepaw," Drizzlepaw breathed in the moonlight. "Huh?" Jadepaw was looking at the sky, searching for the biggest star. "I need your opinion." "Sure. About what?" Jadepaw asked absently. "Who do you think would have access to deathberries?" Jadepaw sighed. "Is this about Pondnose? This isn't really a opinion. And to answer your question, every single cat in the whole entire forest."

A puff of warm air blew into Jadepaaw's face. "I guess you're right. But, who would be evil enough to poison an elder?" Jadepaw shook her head. "I don't know, every cat in our Clan doesn't seem even the least bit evil. They may be rude sometimes, but they aren't the least bit evil."

Drizzlepaw nodded. "But that doesn't change the fact that someone in camp is a murderer." *I can't get enough of that.* "I think it's Amber. Listen, she-" "Amber is *not* a murderer. She's one of the most caring and polite cats in the Clans, and she won't even kill prey on the Clan's territory!" Drizzlepaw didn't seem too offended, and he shook it off.

"Then who did it?" "Do you really believe that you can find out who killed Pondnose?" Drizzlepaw just nodded. "Well then, good luck." Jadepaw sniffed, turning back towards the apprentice den. Drizzlepaw breathed out heavily and fell in beside Jadepaw. "Good night." "Night."

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"Good morning! The sun's up! It's a great day to hunt! Let's go, everyone up!" Jadepaw had been up for a while now, but Lightningstrike's upbeat meow seemed to pierce right through her ears and drill into her head. "Maybe you could catch a nice squirrel for Tawny?" Adderjaw called over Lightningstrike.

"He's getting strong enough to have solid prey." Jadepaw groggily nodded in the direction Adderjaw's voice had came from. "I said.....UP UP EVERYONE UP!!!!!!" Fireclaw, Sparrowflight, and Starlight scrambled out of the warriors den. "OH MY STARCLAN LIGHTNINGSTRIKE WHAT'S WRONG!?!?!?" Fireclaw screeched at his daughter.

"Oh, nothing, sorry guys, just apprentices....." Lightningstrike trailed

off, but now Jadepaw was awake. "GOOD MORNING CATS OF THUNDERCLAN!!!!" A hoarse yell came from the medicine cat den, followed by "Ravenstar, shh...oh, he has a bad fever." Cloudpaw's eyes were bulging as he stared warily at the medicine cat den.

Jadepaw blinked the cloudiness from her eyes. She avoided looking at Sparkpaw, who was glaring at her. Jadepaw shifted under her hard stare. Being stared at-the one thing she hated most. "Sparkpaw, Jadepaw, let's go on a hunting patrol!" Jadepaw shuffled unwillingly towards Lightningstrike, her head down.

"Um, Lightningstrike, can I please train with Drizzle-Death-paw today?" Lightningstrike's brow knitted, but she nodded. "Yeah, wait a minute, I'll just have to ask Flipnose." Jadepaw nodded at the ground. Drizzlepaw hurried over to her. "You're training with me?" He asked nervously.

"Uh-huh." Jadepaw replied. "Oh, okay...." He meowed. "Good news, you two can train together!" It wasn't Lightningstrike, but Clawbark who said it. Jadepaw had almost forgotten that he was Drizzlepaw's mentor. *Well, this is going to be fun! I wonder why Drizzlepaw is so nervous.*

"Okay, Jadepaw, I'm just warning you, I may scare away all of the prey." Drizzlepaw warned her this, but Jadepaw didn't believe it until she saw it with her own eyes.

Jadepaw didn't want to insult Drizzlepaw, but he really *was* a horrible hunter. His pawsteps seemed to shake the ground within a range of five tail-lengths. "Drizzlepaw," Jadepaw hissed. "Sorry..." Drizzlepaw was stalking a mouse which was doing, well, *something,* and didn't seem to notice Drizzlepaw's thundering steps. Jadepaw rolled her eyes. It was going to be a long day.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Surise

Chapter 14
Clawbark had brought Jadepaw and Drizzlepaw back exhausted, along with a chipmunk that Clawbark had caught and a bird that Jadepaw and Drizzlepaw had caught. Well, mostly Jadepaw. Drizzlepaw had frightened the bird, causing it to practically fly right into Jadepaw. So, the bird caught itself.

Now it lay limp in Drizzlepaw's jaws, its sad feathered wings drooped and pointed towards the ground. Drizzlepaw puffed out his chest proudly as he carried it into camp; Jadepaw wouldn't tell any cat that it had been a team effort since it appeared to be very important to him.

Clawbark, on the contrary, was an extremely skilled hunter with the grace of a WindClan warrior. For such a large and muscular cat, he seemed to have bird bones. Clawbark also had his chest puffed out, and he raised an eyebrow at Twitchheart, who let out a small giggle and whisked her tail on the ground next to her.

Clawbark dropped the chipmunk onto the fresh-kill pile, trading it in for shrew. He hurried over to Twitchheart and licked her ear as he sat down. Jadepaw went over to it for a meal, maybe the chipmunk. She could share with Cloudpaw and Drizzlepaw. Maybe Clearpaw. Goldenpaw sprinted in front of Jadepaw dramatically, snatching the chipmunk off the top of the pile.

Jadepaw glared at Goldenpaw's back. Her gaze followed Goldenpaw as she sat down, her back pressing against the face of Highrock. Jadepaw didn't think Goldenpaw was supposed to be next to Highrock, well, on Highrock, when Clan meetings weren't taking place.

Let her get in trouble, she deserves it. Jadepaw took a mouse instead and began to head in Clearpaw's direction. She veered away when he settled next to Sparkpaw. In the next few moments, a series of questioning looks came from Clearpaw, who was obviously listening

to some crazy story of Sparkpaw's that twisted her into a villain.

"Drizzlepaw, can we talk?" Drizzlepaw sat down without question, his bird flopping onto the ground with him. "Clawbark always does stuff like this. The one warrior except for dad that doesn't seem bothered by my name is the one who is the most obsessed with hunting." Drizzlepaw let out a small chuckle.

"But he is really nice, and I'm glad to have him as my mentor." Jadepaw gave Drizzlepaw a respectable few moments for him to decide if he was done talking or not. "Drizzlepaw, no questions until the end." Drizzlepaw gave Jadepaw a small frown but said nothing.

"So me and Sparkpaw were battle training when she asked for a play-fight or something. I beat her, even though she was twice my size, and Lightningstrike was impressed and kept on carrying on about my fighting skills until the end of training. After that, Sparkpaw approached me and said 'how could you?' And I asked how could I what, and guess what she said?"

Drizzlepaw shrugged his shoulders and looked up at her from his prey. "She said how could I beat her, and I said I was born good at fighting-" Drizzlepaw made a low whistling sound with his teeth. "And she got all mad, and somehow, the subject turned to mothers, and she said, and I quote, 'Frostfang is a better mom than Dewstorm ever would have!'"

Drizzlepaw's eyes had been elsewhere, but now his attention was back to Jadepaw. "That's horrible! And sorry, it's just how Clearpaw's looking at you..." Jadepaw whipped around to see Clearpaw staring at her accusingly before he turned his whole head in a different direction.

Jadepaw couldn't believe that he had believed Sparkpaw! Jadepaw glared back at Clearpaw, but never could manage to catch his eye. The Clan wasn't very busy, considering the huge amount of cats in it. Creamcall was playing with her kits. Beechkit was a gray tom with green eyes, just like his two other littermates.

Creamcall had had two she-kits. One named Rufflekit, an orange and extremely fluffy kit. The other was named Dewkit, which made

Jadepaw's heart swell. Dewkit had a brown pelt with one white paw. "Take.....THIS!" Rufflekit lunged at Beechkit, sending him careening onto the ground.

Beechkit struggled under Rufflekit's firm grip. Dewkit stalked towards Rufflekit from behind before leaning on her haunches and locking into a tornado of fur with Rufflekit. "Take that, you mangy lump of fur! That'll teach you not to mess with ThunderClan warriors!" Rufflekit bared her tiny fangs at him, barking like a dog.

Jadepaw turned away from the kits. Her heart warmed from the family's interactions, but she couldn't force herself to watch them any longer. Jadepaw was honestly jealous of the family she had never had, even though she had grown up with a father, a foster mother, and six siblings.

It just wasn't the same as having an actual mother, and to grow up with your own family. There was just something different about having a foster mother. She says that she loves everyone equally, yet her favoritism is obvious. Jadepaw's heart as pierced from the loss of her mother.

Dewstorm could've been here right now. *This* instant, her tail draped over Jadepaw's shoulder. She'd be telling Jadepaw to ignore Goldenpaw, and that she was proud of Jadepaw for keeping her cool. Jadepaw allowed herself a tiny smile. That was one good thing to think about.

"Deathpaw! Jadepaw!" Clawbark called from the camp entrance. *Oh no, not another training session!* "We're going to learn some battle moves!!!" Jadepaw drew in a huge breath. She hoped that Drizzlepaw wouldn't think of Jadepaw as boastful if she beat him like she did Sparkpaw.

What if the only thing Drizzlepaw was good at was battle training, and them she ruined it for him and Drizzlepaw would never forgive her? Jadepaw's fur stood on end with a nervous tingle. Maybe it really *was* her fault. Jadepaw should've known that training with another apprentice would be hard.

Jadepaw had saw Ravenstar at sunrise. Ravenstar had had a matted

pelt with moss knotted into his pelt from writhing in his nest so much. A putrid scent had pierced her nose and gave her a headache the second Jadepaw had entered the den. Something was seriously wrong, inside it smelled like an infection or something.

A rush of warm air had rushed into her face, making her eyes dry. It was cold outside, and the temperature difference was amazing, yet very disturbing. "Jadepaw, come on!" Drizzlepaw called over his shoulder. He was a few tail-lengths ahead of her, almost walking backwards while talking to her.

"We're almost there! I want to see what Ravenstar taught you! He must know a lot about fighting if he got chosen to be leader," Jadepaw shrugged. That was actually true, though Ravenstar hadn't taught her what Jadepaw noticed to be different moves.

Clawbark had veered towards Twitchheart, who was hunting with Hawkpaw. "Mouse-Dung!" Hawkpaw gritted his teeth, watching the blackbird he was stalking soar up into the sky. Clawbark took a long side-step towards Twitchheart. Twitchheart offered him a small grin.

"He's really good," Twitchheart said through the corner of her mouth, but any cat in eight tail-lengths could hear her. Jadepaw rolled her eyes. "Yeah, so is Drizzlepaw, and as I can see, Jadepaw is, but I haven't even spent a whole day with her!" Jadepaw cocked her ears towards them.

"Ravenstar isn't going to get better, Clawbark! Just consult Flipnose." *Consult him about what?* Clawbark let out a sigh. "I guess you're right." He sighed. "I cant do an-" a distant roll of thunder shook Jadepaw's whispers and drowned out Clawbark and Twitchheart's words.

Clouds were moving in and another clap of thunder sounded. Jadepaw's pelt stood on end, telling her a storm was coming. "He can't do a *what?*" Drizzlepaw hissed into her ear. Jadepaw twitched her ear. "I don't know." Hawkpaw acted like he had heard everything, and he had his chest puffed out for some reason.

Jadepaw rolled his eyes at how annoying Hawkpaw could be

sometimes. She wished she could've heard what they had said. "It looks like a storm's coming," Clawbark meowed. *Duh,* "Okay, let's get on with our day," Clawbark announced, leading them away from his mate.

Jadepaw could almost feel the ground shake underneath her paws as another roll of thunder shook the Earth itself. As a kit, Jadepaw had been told that the thunder was the sound of Dewstorm pacing in wait for her kits' arrival. Now Jadepaw knew that that wasn't true; though she still didn't know the cause of the anonymous sounds.

When Jadepaw had kits, she would tell them that the sound was the warriors of StarClan preparing the dens for their new residents. She shivered. Maybe she shouldn't talk about death to her new born kits. "Okay, we're going to be learning something special!" Clawbark shook out his pelt excitedly. "Now that I have you two, let's learn some group exercises."

Wow, Ravenstar only let us train by ourselves, it'll be cool to do something with another Clanmate. "First, always conceal the size of your forces." "Huh?" Drizzlepaw inquired with a tilt of he's head. "It means that you don't want your enemies to know how much help you have, so you have to hide them," Jadepaw explained coolly, though her paws were tingling to get started with the exercise.

Clawbark gave Jadepaw a curt nod of approval. "Yes, and I want you guys to do an activity today. Gather a random amount of apprentices if they aren't in the middle of something important, bring them here- but hide them- and try to catch me off guard with the size of your force."

Jadepaw's pads rolled over the ground, waiting for Clawbark to let her go. "Go on, go ahead!" With a leap of excitement, Drizzlepaw started off, Jadepaw at his tail. "Let's go and get Sparkpaw! She's a good fighter!" Jadepaw's heart sank. "No, we don't even know where she is." Jadepaw meowed dismissively.

Drizzlepaw kept pace with Jadepaw. "Yeah, I do! Before she left, she told me that she would be hunting near the pond for some mice looking for food." *Wow, that's really specific.* "Okay, I'll find

Cloudpaw and Hawkpaw!" Jadepaw veered away from Drizzlepaw in search of Hawkpaw.

Last time Jadepaw had seen Hawkpaw was when Twitchheart and Clawbark had been speaking, not too far from the training grounds. She spun around when she heard voices. "That's it, Hawkpaw. That bird will never see you coming!" A low murmur came from Jadepaw's right. "And it won't hear you, either." Twitchheart added.

"Hawkpaw!" "Jadepaw, what are you doing here?" Jadepaw stopped, gasping for breath. "It's my territory, too. Anyways, do you want to join in on the sneak attack on Clawbark?" Twitchheart gave Jadepaw a look that almost convinced her that she was out of her mind.

"Oh, it's allowed." "Then how would it be a sneak attack?" "Because, Clawbark doesn't know when we'll come back." Hawkpaw gave a shrug of consent. "This is going to be interesting." Hawkpaw murmured. "If it's alright with you," Hawkpaw meowed quickly to his mentor.

Twitchheart replied with an amused expression. "If you really want to," She meowed. Hawkpaw went bolting off at lightning speed, but quickly slowed down. "Is anyone else coming?" Jadepaw nodded. "All of the other apprentices we can find."

Jadepaw looked at the battle force that had been formed outside of the training grounds. Goldenpaw and Cloudpaw were hunched together, their heads poking slightly outside the low brush. Beside them, Sparkpaw, Drizzlepaw, Clearpaw, Hawkpaw, and Jadepaw crouched, their tails swishing gently on the ground.

Clawbark was glancing from left to right, slowly spinning in a circle. *He'll never know we're coming.* The wind blew on her tail, and she panicked. *We're not downwind!* The other apprentices seemed to notice, also, because they were scooting quickly to the right.

The bushes rustled. "I know you guys are here," Clawbark meowed. He faced where the apprentices used to be and braced himself. Goldenpaw let out a small giggle, Clawbark was almost facing opposite form them now. "ThunderClan, attack!!!" Drizzlepaw

yowled.

Jadepaw shot forward with paws outstretched. She landed on the ground in front of Clawbark, who was locked into a spinning fur ball with two other apprentices. Clearpaw broke away from Clawbark and Cloudpaw, panting. Cloudpaw came out on top. His paw was planted on top of Clawbark.

Clawbark tucked in his paws and shot them forward. Cloudpaw flew off of him with an *oof.* Drizzlepaw rushed over to Cloudpaw, helping him up to his paws. With no cat occupying Clawbark, Clawbark leaped up with a start and rushed to Jadepaw.

With a screech, Jadepaw rolled onto her back and back onto her paws. Clawbark landed beside her. Jadepaw lunged at him and wrapped her paws around his shoulders. Clawbark stumbled under her weight, but quickly regained his balance. He tried to shake Jadepaw off of his back. Jadepaw felt like she was going to get flung to the ground any second now.

"Cloudpaaaaaaw!" Jadepaw screeched as she was thrown off. Jadepaw winced as her ankles hit the ground before her chest, so close to landing on her paws. Jadepaw rolled over, trying to jump back on to her paws, but her legs buckled from the pressure on her paws.

Jadepaw just lay there for a second, heaving breaths. She winced again from a stab of pain shooting from her back paws. Clawbark let Goldenpaw slide off of him. The small clearing had grown fairly silent. "Jadepaw, are you okay?" Clawbark asked worriedly, trying to push Jadepaw up with his muzzle.

"Yeah, yeah." Jadepaw meowed weakly, pushing herself onto her paws. She stood there for a second, teetering on her shaky paws, before falling on top of Clawbark. "Woah, Jadepaw, lay back down." Jadepaw gladly obeyed, sinking to her paws.

Jadepaw's whole body felt shaky from her collision with the ground, and her paws felt like they were being stabbed with sharp rocks repeatedly. "Let's go get you to Adderjaw." Clawbark meowed, hoisting Jadepaw across his shoulders. "Wait, no! I can walk!"

Jadepaw waved her legs desperately in the air, showing him they could still work.

Shooting pains shot through her from the movements, making her vision dim. Sparkpaw grunted. "Not that I can see," *why does she have to be such a fox-heart even when I'm in pain?* Jadepaw thought ruefully. Clawbark didn't sit her down, instead he gave a bounce, shifting Jadepaw farther onto his shoulders.

"Clawbark-" Jadepaw hissed partly with pain, partly with aggravation. "PUT ME DOWN!!!" She growled. Clawbark didn't listen to her. Jadepaw really didn't want to be put down; she probably would fall back down and black out. Just, the embarrassment of six apprentices padding behind her with sympathy in their eyes, or in Sparkpaw's case, resent, was horrible.

They were almost back to camp, and for that Jadepaw was grateful. Her vision blurred and darkened, and Jadepaw began to feel dizzy with pain. "Jadepaw! What's wrong?" Yellowstone asked once they entered camp. Jadepaw felt the world dim from the shooting pain in her leg, making everything fade. Starlight's worried expression was the last thing she saw.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 15
Jadepaw was lying on soft moss, an extra clump cushioning her leg. her leg had a brace on it, a thick branch with some sort of wrapping securing it to her leg. Jadepaw was impressed with herself. *Wow, I broke my leg.* Immediately, it was awkward sharing a den with the now-silent Ravenstar. Tawny had died a while ago, and Amber had left, too.

It just didn't feel right being in the same den as the Clan leader, like she was invading his medical privacy. "Oh, you're up. Do you feel okay?" Jadepaw had just noticed Starlight, who was lying in a nest near Jadepaw's. "Well," Jadepaw couldn't move her leg, but just above it throbbed with pain.

"Well, better, I guess." Jadepaw murmured, not bothering to raise her head, which was buried in her nest. Starlight nodded and scooted closer to her. He was acting like he had never seen an injury before, though he had told Jadepaw and her littermates ho he had fought a fox and gotten really sick as an apprentice.

Starlight sighed. "I know it seems like I'm overprotective and I follow you and your siblings everywhere. Which I do. But I do it because, before she died, I promised her that if anything happened to her, I would protect you guys. And I would allow myself to be happy again, and not to slink in the shadow of her death."

"And I worry very night if I fulfilled that promise, and if I made her proud." Starlight nosed Jadepaw's ear gently, "I love you," Jadepaw offered softly, there were no other words she could summon up. "I love you, too."
. . .
"Keep that thing on, or I will hunt you down to the depths of the forest and fasten your cast to a tree!" Adderjaw said this threateningly with irritation at Jadepaw, but Jadepaw still, for some reason, really liked him as a cat of her Clan. "Okay, I'll make sure it doesn't start to fall off, otherwise, I'll see you." Adderjaw

gave Jadepaw a nod of approval.

Jadepaw began to pad away, dragging her awkward leg behind her or occasionally swinging it over an obstacle. It had been a moon since her injury. Her leg had been broken in several places, and Adderjaw and Moonrise were very worried if it would heal right.

Almost all of Jadepaw's time in the medicine cat den was used persuading them to let her out after one moon, not two moons. Sparkpaw probably resented her for eating the biggest pieces of prey for so long in order to 'heal'. Ravenpelt had occasionally meowed fervently about unreasonable things, Moonrise said due to his fever.

Jadepaw had volunteered to go on the dawn patrol with Flipstar, Sparrowflight, Bristlefur, and Clearpaw. Moonrise had recently announced that Ravenpelt would never heal fully, and had traveled to Moonpool to visit with StarClan. Now, Flipstar was leader. Since Ravenpelt would never recover, Jadepaw had been assigned Bristlefur as her new mentor. The deputy was going to be picked at sunset.

"Cats of ThunderClan, please gather beneath Highrock for a Clan meeting!" Rufflekit, Dewkit, Beechkit, and Creamcall hurried out of the nursery. Obviously, the kits thought it was their ceremony. At one moon old. "I have an announcement to make," Jadepaw hobbled over to the rock, finding that this was a lot more exercise than she had expected.

"Ravenst, Ravenpelt, has made some decisions in the past that I didn't agree with, but this was the worst. And I want to make it right. Deathpaw, please step forward." Jadepaw felt a small stirring of excitement stir inside of her. Drizzlepaw stepped past Jadepaw and offered her a nervous smile.

"I believe that this apprentice's mother in StarClan is watching over him now, and I hope I have made the right decision." Flipnose stared deep into Drizzlepaw's eyes. "Deathpaw, I hope you can forgive me for not standing up to how other cats treated you and your horrible name."

Jadepaw flinched back. *Well, that came out wrong.* "I don't see the need for an official ceremony, for it was meant all along. Deathpaw, you shall be known as Drizzlepaw know until you become a warrior." Jadepaw gave a small leap of excitement, and Drizzlepaw had a gleam of excitement in his eyes.

Starlight was beaming proudly next to Cloudpaw, who had hung behind. "Wow, I can't believe it!" Drizzlepaw meowed excitedly. Jadepaw shared his happiness, maybe even more than him. She was glad that Drizzlepaw had finally got the name StarClan intended.
. . .
Jadepaw burst through camp proudly, holding two mice. It was Leaf-Fall, and prey was beginning to grow scarce. Beside her stood Bristlefur. It was weird to think that her fathers' father was mentoring her. "I would say I taught you well, but, actually several cats taught you," Bristlefur had been rambling with excitement of having another apprentice.

Bristlefur was old enough to resign to be an elder, but Jadepaw guessed that Bristlefur didn't want to. "The hunting patrol's here!" Goldenpaw announced. Drizzlepaw glared at her resentfully. The Clan stayed silent, gathered around the medicine cat den. Jadepaw fell silent, as did the rest of the patrol.

Jadepaw nudged her way between her frozen Clanmates, their limbs as stiff as branches. A small dark ball was huddled in the corner of the den, and Adderjaw was lying next to it. Moonrise was taking Adderjaw's place at half-heartedly shooing the Clanmates away.

Jadepaw's stomach flipped. *Was he dead?* Ravenpelt looked so small, as small as a new apprentice with bones jutting out of his pelt. The crowd of cats slowly faded away, but they weren't moving. The corners of Jadepaw's vision were fading, leaving only Ravenpelt in her field of vision.

I killed him! Oh my StarClan! I killed him! Jadepaw was growing lightheaded, and the throbbing pain from her injured leg vanished suddenly. Her heart was pounding hard in her chest, like a bird struggling to escape from an inexperienced apprentice's paws.

Jadepaw fought not to panic, the medicine cats already had way to much on their paws. Jadepaw spun away, holding in her screech until she bolted through the camp entrance. Her yowl shook the forest, and Clearpaw came running. "Oh, Jadepaw! Are you okay?" He gasped.

Jadepaw knew that she didn't have to answer the question, but she nodded. Jadepaw gulped in breaths of air through her sore throat. "It's okay, it's okay." He soothed her. "No, it's not. I killed him! I killed the Clan leader! My mentor! I'm not okay. And it's not okay!

"I'm a horrible cat! I could've just held on, but I was selfish and worried about only myself! My jaw would've been healed by now, but instead of a hurt jaw, Ravenstar-Ravenpelt's dead!!!" Jadepaw's thoughts were jumbled an unexplained, but Clearpaw didn't mention it.

"You're wrong, you couldn't-" I couldn't *what?*" Jadepaw gasped between breaths. Clearpaw stayed calm and continued stroking her back. "You couldn't have known, and, even if you did, you couldn't have held on. You both would be seriously injured." Jadepaw turned and made her injured leg more visible. "Could it be worse than this?" She growled, wincing as she moved the leg too much.

Clearpaw looked exasperated. "Yes, you could be paralyzed, or even dead!" Jadepaw sighed. "Well, it wold be better, dead and painless in StarClan instead of causing Ravenpelt's death!" "Do you think that just because you died with Ravenpelt, it would somehow lessen his injury?"

Jadepaw gulped in air when she stopped talking. "I guess you're right," She whispered at the ground. Clearpaw fell silent. The sun was setting, and Jadepaw's controlled breathing helped her climb down. Jadepaw watched her shadow looming in front of her on the grass. She watched the shadow of Clearpaw's tail tip slowly flick on her shoulder.

Jadepaw felt the steady tap of his tail, up and down, up and down. Jadepaw shifted into a position in which she was laying down on top of her paws. Her eyelids threatened to close, and she was fighting to keep them open. "Go ahead, go to sleep. I'll still be here

in the morning." With that reassurance, Jadepaw allowed herself to drift into sleep.

. . .

As Clearpaw had promised, Jadepaw was lying on top of his back, and he was sprawled in the yellowing grass. Through the darkness, a tiny ray of sunshine filtered into the branches. With Jadepaw's stirring, Clearpaw scrambled up from underneath Jadepaw. "Oh! Did we miss the vigil?" Jadepaw's heart pounded in her throat.

She scrambled back into the camp to see her Clanmates murmuring in soft voices and taking glances up onto Highrock. Standing up tall on top of Highrock was Starlight, organizing patrols. Jadepaw's stomach flipped over. *My dad's the deputy!* Jadepaw stood in astonishment, listening for the cats who were going on patrols.

"Er, Jadepaw, Bristlefur, Drizzlepaw, and Clawbark will go on the dawn patrol." Starlight meowed. "Drizzlepaw and Clawbark went out early to hunt," Yellowstone meowed helpfully. Starlight dipped his head. "In their place, Sparrowflight may go." "May Clearpaw come with me?" Sparrowflight meowed. "I wanted to help him improve on his hunting skills."

Starlight nodded politely. "Yes you may." He replied. Jadepaw swung her head around camp and felt a pang of guilt. *I missed Ravenpelt's vigil!* Jadepaw joined Bristlefur at the entrance of camp. "I know that I'm a new mentor, but don't worry, your final assessment won't be delayed." Jadepaw let out a breath she didn't know she was holding. *Thank StarClan!*

Jadepaw wondered when that assessment would be. It was about time for Jadepaw to become a warrior. Clearpaw fell in beside her, his eyes haunted. "What's wrong?" Jadepaw asked him as they filed through the camp entrance. "Nothing, nothing. I just miss Ravenpelt." He meowed quietly. Jadepaw squinted into his sky-blue eyes. His pupils were wide with innocence, and Jadepaw believed him.

Deep down, even though Ravenstar wasn't the most sane or affectionate cat in ThunderClan, he was good. Bristlefur stopped leading the patrol for a moment and sniffed. "Let's go to the clearing near WindClan territory. No cat has hunted there in three days."

Jadepaw let out a purr at the prospect of bringing jawfulls of prey for Creamcall to feed her kits, and Sparrowflight's eyes lit up.

Clearpaw stayed silent, squirming beside Jadepaw. Jadepaw was preparing herself for a trek across ThunderClan territory by stretching her muscles and bending her back as far as she could before the pressure on her hind leg became overwhelming. "Clearpaw, what's wrong?" Clearpaw sped up his pace as he walked on the worn-out trail leading to the designated clearing.

"Nothing, really," He meowed convincingly. Jadepaw stayed close to him and tried to make eye contact. "Woah!" Jadepaw exclaimed, too busy looking at Clearpaw to notice a rock jutting out of the ground. Jadepaw shrugged Bristlefur and Sparrowflight off, embarrassed, as they gathered around her to watch a bead of blood well up on her front pad. "I'm okay." Jadepaw heaved herself up on three legs and brushed past Bristlefur.

Once the two warriors had confirmed that Jadepaw was fine, they went back to their past arrangement- Bristlefur, Sparrowflight, and Jadepaw and Clearpaw side by side. "Are you okay?" Clearpaw asked. "Yeah, it just scratched the surface of my pad." "Good, because we don't need you limping on two legs," Clearpaw joked.

Jadepaw laughed, imagining herself hobbling with two legs raised, one in front and one in the back, kneeling down with parted jaws to snag a blackbird from the fresh-kill pile. "I won't have this brace on forever, you know?" Jadepaw meowed. Clearpaw grunted. "We can only hope," "Okay, something isn't right. Clearpaw, what is wrong with you?"

"Nothing!" Clearpaw hissed, letting himself fall behind Jadepaw. Jadepaw slowed her pace until she was standing beside Clearpaw again. "Yes, there is. What is it?" Clearpaw's body sagged as he realized he would have to tell Jadepaw. "It's Ravenpelt." "What about him?" "He's a murderer!" Clearpaw blurted.

"What?!" Clearpaw sucked in a breath. "He said something. I had a thorn stuck in my pad, and I needed Moonrise to pull in out." As he spoke, Clearpaw raised his paw to show a small spot of dried blood on his pad. "I didn't realize that Ravenpelt was dying, or I would've

left. I swear! But I didn't, so I padded halfway into the den before I heard a strained murmur.

"Ravenpelt was speaking to Adderjaw- I don't know where Moonrise was- and I overheard him, but I wasn't trying to eavesdrop. He said 'Fadetail told me to- I would do anything for my love. She told me to kill Starlight- not Pondnose!' I ran out of the den as fast as I could." Jadepaw's heart was pounding in her throat.

"S-so, he was trying to kill my dad? Why?" Jadepaw stammered. "I don't know why Fadetail would tell him to do that- I think he's insane." Jadepaw let out a small whimper. "So, instead of Starlight being dead, Pondnose is?" Jadepaw didn't understand why, but she felt like this whole catastrophe was her fault.

Clearpaw nodded. "But what danger does Starlight pose to the Clan?" Jadepaw felt her whole entire body shake. "I don't know. He's such a nice cat, he could never do anything wrong! He did nothing wrong-nothing!"

. . .

Jadepaw stared warily at her father, who was talking to Fireclaw in a low voice. "We have to tell Flipstar!" She meowed into Clearpaw's ear. "No! Adderjaw heard, and he obviously didn't tell Flipstar! It must not be very important." Jadepaw tensed. "He-he tried to murder my dad! This is very important!" "Then why doesn't Flipstar know?"

Jadepaw shook her head. "Because Adderjaw's a tense scaredy-mouse!" She meowed, desperate to notify the Clan leader. Clearpaw's eyes flashed. "I guess that we really should." He murmured worriedly.

"What!?" Flipstar screeched. "We aren't lying!" Jadepaw blurted suddenly. Flipstar suddenly looked old and worn out. "I know you wouldn't lie about this. You two are good and honest cats." *Isn't he going to do anything about this?* "I can't exactly interrogate Ravenpelt," Flipstar meowed wearily.

"Oh please! Fadetail did *not* appear and order Ravenpelt to murder Starlight!" Clearpaw exclaimed. Flipstar sighed loudly. "You two are right, but I don't see what to do. After all, Ravenpelt's dead."

Flipstar's voice cracked. "I can't punish him. Only StarClan can." Jadepaw let out an impatient puff of air. "StarClan can't protect Starlight!" "Yes, they can, but I agree with both of you.

"Fadetail most likely didn't directly order Ravenpelt to murder a cat." "Fadetail wasn't there at all! Ravenpelt's insane!" Jadepaw slapped her tail across her jaws. Flipstar glared at her, his eyes seemed to bore into Jadepaw's soul. "Sorry," She squeaked. Flipstar gave her a curt nod. Everything Jadepaw said was fairly true. Ravenpelt had been weird.

"I'll alert the Clan," Flipstar sighed, padding out of the den. Jadepaw clambered clumsily down from Flipstar's den hastily. "Cats of ThunderClan! Gather beneath Highrock for a Clan meeting!" Beechkit, Dewkit, and Rufflekit scrambled out of the den squealing. "Beechkit, move!" "No, tell Dewkit to move! I can't see over her big head!"

Dewkit turned and licked her brown chest fur. "I don't have a big head!" She mewed. Cloudpaw emerged from the apprentice den along with Goldenpaw. Sparkpaw stretched as she sat up on a rock. Jadepaw sat in between Sunray and Creamcall. "I have been notified of some previous suspicious activity. When Pondnose was murdered-"

"This was moons ago! What is this all about?" Scatfur called from the back. "Ravenpelt murdered Pondnose, he was trying to kill Starlight." Horrified gasps echoed through camp. "Oh my StarClan!" Creamcall meowed. Peppernose wrapped his tail around his mate. "How would you know this? And why are you just now telling us this?"

"I just found out." Flipstar meowed calmly. "Okay, what does this have to do with us?" Frostfang asked. "Ravenstar believed that Fadetail visited him. Fadetail didn't. StarClan doesn't just order cats to murder each other. Either Ravenpelt was completely insane or a cat was convincing him that Fadetail was visiting him."

"I'm just wondering, but what does this have to do with us?" Mudfur asked. "If a cat *was* acting as Fadetail, they'd be a cat in this very camp." Jadepaw's fur tingled with fear at the prospect of a

murderous cat slinking through the camp at night. "Keep an eye out, and keep your ears pricked for any suspicious activity. If you notice anything out of the ordinary, report to me or Starlight immediately."

Jadepaw followed the stream of cats heading in all different directions, and she found herself standing by the fresh-kill pile. She picked herself a starling and flopped down on her stomach. Drizzlepaw lay down next to her with a mouse. "Wow, this is crazy," He murmured softly. "It could be anyone in camp. They wanted our dad dead."

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 16
Jadepaw parted her jaws slightly, tasting the air. "Did you smell that?" Hawkpaw meowed quietly. Jadepaw gave him a curt nod to him and glanced at Bristlefur and Twitchheart. "It's ShadowClan," Hawkpaw whispered. He puffed out his chest when Twitchheart looked at him proudly.

Any cat could guess it was WindClan, they smell like rotten rabbits and hostility. Jadepaw crouched on the dry ground, scattered with leaves. Jadepaw felt her paws buzz with energy. They weren't anywhere near the border with WindCan. Dark pelts flashed behind thorn bushes. "Freeze!"

Bristlefur's yowl echoed through the empty air. Slowly, a small patrol emerged from behind the bushes. "What are you doing on our territory?" Twitchheart hissed fiercely. A dark tabby apprentice lowered his head. Another apprentice glanced up at her mentor questioningly.

A dark red she-cat looked at Bristlefur. "Hunting." She meowed calmly. Bristlefur looked like he was about to explode. "Hunting!?!?" He growled. "Yes," The tabby squeaked defiantly. Jadepaw bristled. "Why are you hunting on our territory? Did you scare all of the rabbits off of yours?" She hissed.

A gray tom glared down at Jadepaw. "Answer her." Bristlefur growled threateningly. "Sprintstar ordered us to visit you," The red she-cat growled. "And you're hunting?" Hissed Hawkpaw. "Who are you to talk?" The tabby apprentice asked, hostile. "Well, I *am* the one on my own territory right now, so I suggest that you shut your-"

Twitchheart gave him a glare that told him that he'd best be quiet unless he wanted to do a moon of dawn patrols. "Why are you hunting when you were supposed to visit our camp?" Jadepaw asked, her tone dripping with hostility. "We- we- were hungry." The white she-cat faltered, her head down. "What kind of dishonorable

warriors are you to hunt on another Clan's territory, and try to keep it a secret?" Bristlefur growled.

"We *said* that we were hunting," The gray she-cat meowed. "How dare you hunt here?" Hawkpaw bristled. "We- we're sorry." The red she-cat dipped her head. "What did you catch?" Bristlefur asked, not letting his guard down. "Just a few of your scrawny squirrels," The tabby apprentice scoffed.

"Those *scrawny squirrels* may have just happened to be meals for our queen, elder, and medicine cats!" Hissed Twitchheart. "There's plenty of them in the forest," The red she-cat meowed calmly. With a hiss of rage, Bristlefur launched himself at the gray warrior. Jadepaw followed in on the white apprentice which had been casting glares at her when her mentor wasn't looking.

The apprentice hissed and dug her teeth into Jadepaw's shoulder. With a yelp of pain, Jadepaw allowed herself to slump to the ground. Jadepaw shot back up, butting her head against the young apprentices' stomach. Jadepaw felt superior standing above the white she-cat until the gray warrior barreled into her side.

With Jadepaw's disability in her leg, a shooting pain shot through her leg up to her right ear. In the fog of pain, Jadepaw clawed desperately at the warrior's back. Hawkpaw crashed into the warrior, sending him flying off of her. Jadepaw pressed her ear onto the cold ground. She could hear the blood rushing in her ears loudly.

The red she-cat leaned over Jadepaw, her eyes glittering. Jadepaw craned her neck towards the she-cat and bit her ear, tearing off a tuft of fur. The she-cat let out a yelp and followed her Clanmates out of forest territory. Jadepaw sat up and yowled after them "You'd better not come back!"

Hawkpaw scowled after the patrol, then turned to Jadepaw. "Wow! That was awesome!" "We'd better report this to Flipstar," Bristlefur meowed in a low tone. Twitchheart nodded in agreement. Jadepaw felt her shoulder tingle all the way to her back. The bite wasn't deep, but it had hit a nerve. She cringed at the zapping sensation going down her spine.

Jadepaw forced herself to stand up and follow her Clanmates down the winding trail that led to ThunderClan camp. Finally, Jadepaw staggered into the camp entrance next to Twitchheart. Bristlefur and Twitchheart left her side to go and report the news to Flipstar, who looked unusually weary. Jadepaw limped into the medicine cat den.

Adderjaw was reaching his paw into a hollowed out hole that held comfrey when he noticed Jadepaw hobbling through the entrance. "Jadepaw, what-" His eyes narrowed as he gazed at Jadepaw's shoulder. Two fang marks signaled to where she had been bitten, and the cobwebs that had bound a brace onto Jadepaw's leg were unwinding and falling apart.

"I told you to take it easy! You weren't supposed to join a border patrol for another moon or two!" Jadepaw felt a pang of guilt for the aging medicine cat for putting him through so much trouble. "I didn't go on a border patrol!" She mewed. "WindClan attacked! We taught those stupid furballs to stay off of ThunderClan territory!"

Adderjaw shook his head doubtfully as he dug through the herb stores. "You aren't doing yourself any favors by continuing to injure yourself," The brown tabby meowed, winding a fresh layer of cobwebs around her leg. "You're only delaying your warrior ceremony." He added distantly.

Jadepaw remembered scornfully how Goldenstrike had chased a fox off of ThunderClan territory along with Cloudwhisker, and they were both immediatley appointed as 'official warriors of ThunderClan'. Jadepaw had still been injured badly back then, so she hadn't been allowed to leave the den for the ceremony.

Jadepaw allowed her shoulders to sag as she watched Cloudwhisker and Goldenstrike pad past the medicine cat den, a pep in their step. Jadepaw couldn't pinpoint when exactly of *how* exactly Cloudwhisker had fallen for her, but they were mates now, even though Jadepaw couldn't *stand* that stuck up furball.

Jadepaw was jerked from her thoughts with a zap of pain. "Sorry," it was Moonrise's voice, and Jadepaw noticed that she was dabbing Jadepaw's shoulder wound with something. "It's just to prevent an

infection." She meowed. "Who knows what could've got into that wound?" Jadepaw shrugged a single shoulder at her.

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Jadepaw's wounds had finally healed, and she had passed her final assessment. She awaited eagerly beside Cleartail for her warrior name; all of their littermates had already received their warrior names. "Jadepaw, you have trained hard to understand the way of StarClan's noble code. Do you promise to uphold the warrior code and protect your Clan, even at the cost of you life?"

Jadepaw's voice rang through camp clear and confident. "I do." "Then by the powers of StarClan, we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan. You will now be known as Jadeheart." "Jadeheart! Jadeheart! Jadeheart!" Jadeheart's chest swelled with pride. *I'm a warrior now!* She thought excitedly.

"Congratulations!" Drizzlespot pressed his nose to her pelt. "You, too!" Jadeheart meowed. Jadeheart felt energy surge through her. *So, what do I do first as a warrior?* The sun was sinking behind the forest of trees, and the sky was stained red.

Jadeheart watched from afar as Drizzlespot talked smoothly to Sparkpelt. She still wasn't talking to Jadeheart, and it made Jadeheart feel lonely. Sparkpelt had been Jadeheart's best friend for a one amount of time. "Sparkpelt, Jadeheart, Cleartail, Drizzlespot, and Hawkpool, please gather near the camp entrance for your vigil."

Jadeheart felt her stomach soar into her throat. *Wow, I get to guard all of the cats in ThunderClan! Flipstar trusts me with all of his Clanmates lives!* Jadeheart sucked in a big breath and puffed out her chest. She approached the entrance proudly beside Drizzlespot. "You must guard the camp with your lives, and, unless there is trouble, which in that case, you must alert the camp."

Jadeheart nodded as if she were listening to what he was saying, but her thoughts were elsewhere. Dewstorm's visit and Flipstar's warning to the Clan were ringing loudly in her ears, and she struggled to block them out. *Remember who the villain is.....if you see anything suspicious, report it immediately.*

The whole Clan had been unusually wary of each other, unless they were close friends. Jadeheart watched Creamcall herd her kits into the nursery, shooting an approving glance towards Jadeheart. She wondered who would get which one of Creamcall's kits- Jadeheart was fond of Dewkit for obvious reasons.

The rest of the cats withdrew into their dens, only leaving Fireclaw dragging a squirrel into the elders den. Fireclaw and Yellowfang had chosen the life of an elder together; they were getting old and frail. Jadeheart silently vowed to protect them- she would die over and over again for her Clanmates.

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"Just like ShadowClan, always late." The Sprintstar grumbled. Jadeheart felt nervous to be meeting Cherrypaw, Foldpaw, and Streampaw again. "Jadepaw!" Jadeheart whipped around to face Foldpaw, his yellow eyes glinting in the moonlight. "Actually, it's Jadeheart."

Foldpaw nodded and smiled. "I'm Foldear." He meowed. "Cool." Jadepaw dipped her head to him. "So...where's Streampaw and Cherrypaw?" "I don't know where Cherrypaw is," He meowed. "Streampaw..Streampaw...he died." Foldear's voice faltered.

"Oh, StarClan. I'm so sorry. I didn't-" "It's okay. He drowned." Foldear's shoulders sagged. "We were playing near a river after battle training. The river was rushing extra hard, and I rolled into the river. Streampaw dived in to save me...we're both real good swimmers. I clambered onto the stones near the bank.

"Streampaw....well, he couldn't get out of the river before it led into deeper territory....we all suspected he drowned, then Ridgespot found him lifeless farther down on our territory." Foldear's whiskers quavered. "We decided to name him Streamwhisp. He...was...my best friend."

Jadeheart lifted her head to the Silverpelt. *You were too young to die,* She thought somberly. "Great StarClan, there's ShadowClan." Peppernose muttered. "About time," Another murmured. Shadestar climbed onto Fourtrees hurriedly. "I apologize for our late arrival. There was a little trouble in ShadowClan, but nothing we can't handle."

Shadestar's voice rang through the full clearing. "ShadowClan has been well, though our medicine cats have been treating several cases of Whitecough." Murmurs rose from the crowd. "Did you have it?" Cats drew away from each other. "Are there any remaining cats with Whitecough?" Flipstar asked.

"No, all is well." Shadestar replied. "I see that we have a new leader of ThunderClan," Specklestar observed. Flipstar acknowledged the RiverClan leader with a somber expression. "Yes, Ravenstar died of infection. Now, I am leader and Starlight is our deputy."

The Clans were silent for a moment before breaking out in cheer. "Flipstar! Starlight! Flipstar! Starlight! Flipstar....!" Jadeheart yowled, proud that her dad was the Clan deputy. "ThunderClan is very well, and we have some new warriors in the Clan. Goldenstrike and Cloudwhisker chased a fox off of our territory-"

"I hope it wasn't on ours," The old WindClan leader growled. "No, Sprintstar, off of Clan territory. That beast is the twoleg's problem now," Flipstar reported proudly. Looks of approval came from the the other leaders and warriors. Jadeheart wondered if Flipstar would mention the suspicions of murder in her Clan.

"ThunderClan is proud to announce that Twitchheart was expecting kits," Flipstar began, only to be interrupted by yowls of approval from his Clanmates. "Oh, that's great, Twitchheart, I didn't know!" Twitchheart shrank into her light tabby pelt with embarrassment. "Yeah," She meowed, her tone at a nervous pitch.

"That's all I have to report for ThunderClan." Flipstar announced. "Great," Sprintstar meowed impatiently. "WindClan is as strong as ever, and our population is growing. Hunting is well, and I am not worried about this coming Leaf-Bare. We have three new apprentices, Harepaw, Crookpaw, and Flickpaw. We, also have a new deputy. Peachpelt, please stand."

As the Clans let out yowls of approval for the well-respected warrior, Jadeheart thought suspiciously. *Sprintstar speaks too confidently. There's something not right.* "Cottontail, my mate, recently went to StarClan. He died a peaceful death, the most an old cat like me could ask for. I'm resigning as Clan leader."

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It had been two moons since the Gathering, and Creamcall's kits were finally six moons old. "Beechkit could go far," Cleartail meowed, scooping a scrawny mouse from the fresh-kill pile. "He's very intelligent and has a great memory," Jadeheart agreed quietly.

"Between you and me, I hope for Dewkit." Jadeheart meowed. Cleartail heaved a great sigh. "Of course you do," "No, really. She's far more stronger than the rest of her littermates." Jadeheart watched Creamcall drag Dewkit off of an old tree stump in camp. Dewkit had her claws dug into it, and Creamcall was clearly straining to pull her off.

"Dewkit, let *go!* You're going to ruffle your fur!" "Tell *Rufflekit* that! *Look* at her!" Dewkit squealed. "She was born like that, stop making excuses." Creamcall argued through gritted teeth. "All cats gather beneath Highrock for a Clan meeting!" Flipstar called.

"Now, let me groom your-" Dewkit scrambled away from her. "*Mom!* I'm an apprentice now, stop embarrassing me!" Creamcall ignored the young she-cat, licking Dewkit roughly with her tongue. Jadeheart fell behind Sparrowflight and Scatfur beneath Highrock. "Beechkit, you are at the age of six moons and are ready to be apprenticed. Please step forward." With trembling whiskers, Beechkit inched towards him.

"Cloudwhisker, you have been trained well and have proved to be a good warrior. I hope you can pass down all of your knowledge down to Beechpaw." Beaming, Cloudwhisker touched noses with the young tom and took his place beside Sparkpelt and Mudfur. "Dewkit, you are at the age of six moons." Flipstar paused, looking down at Dewkit's bouncing paws.

"And you are clearly excited to have a mentor!" The whole Clan let out a chuckle. "Young cats," Fireclaw commented jokingly. "Jadeheart has gone through several training methods with her mentors, and I'm sure she will be glad to have an apprentice with your enthusiasm!" The Clan chuckled again when Jadeheart stepped towards the bounding Dewpaw.

Dewpaw was almost jumping out of her pelt after the ceremony.

"So, are we going to explore the territory? Goldenstrike and Rufflepaw already left!" She complained. "Okay, we're going." Jadeheart gestured towards a rabbit burrow in the ground. "It's important to know where things are located on your territory. You don't want to sprain your ankle by not watching where you're going."

Dewpaw nodded, but Jadeheart knew that this information was going right over her head. "Look over here," Jadeheart meowed, angling her ears towards a wide expanse of trees, stretching from oaks to pines. "That means that we're nearing the ShadowClan border. Dewpaw perked her ears.

"Do we get to meet a patrol? If they take a pawstep near the border, I'll...I'll...claw their ears off!" Jadeheart rested her tail tip on Dewpaw's shoulder. "Slow your roll. They can get as close to the border as they want to, as long as they stay on their side of it."

Dewpaw flicked her tail dismissively. "And what if they *do* pass it." "We warn them not to." "What if they don't listen?" Jadeheart let out a sigh and told her what Dewpaw wanted to hear. "Than we give then a fight that'll teach them to stay on their own side of the border," she snarled mockingly.

Dewpaw jumped into the air. "Yes! Yes! I knew it! Don't worry, I'll give them a scar to remember me by," She spat as she attempted to hiss. Jadeheart gave Dewpaw a nod of approval. "But try to never start a fight. Always try to attempt to resolve a conflict with words instead of aggressive actions."

Dewpaw dipped her head respectively. "Of course," She meowed. Suddenly, the fur on her neck stood up. "Woah, what's *that?*" She was gesturing towards an old twoleg den with her tail. "Oh, that's an abandoned twoleg den." "Oh, I didn't think those were real," "Yeah, they're real all right." Jadeheart assured her. "But they don't bother her too much." Dewpaw's shoulders sagged, disappointed.

Jadeheart desperately sought the right words to perk her up. "But, don't worry, little one, there will be plenty battles for you to fight." Dewpaw craned her neck, seeking something in the distance. "I...I can't see the training grounds." She mewed, embarrassed. Jadeheart

snorted quietly. "That's because it's on the other side of the territory." She meowed patiently.

"Oh." Dewpaw ducked her head. "No, it's okay. It's your first time." Jadeheart gently steered Dewpaw towards a route she knew that led towards a small stream. Dewpaw let out a squeal of delight as the spotted the stream, rapidly lapping up the water until Jadeheart thought the river would run dry.

Dewpaw shrank back when she noticed Jadeheart's impatient stare. "Oh, sorry, my throat's really dry." She meowed. "It's okay, again, it's your first day." Jadepaw reassured her. "Now, let's go see the WindClan border." "Wow! We get to see the borders today?" Dewpaw exclaimed. "What better time to see them?"

Dewpaw ran up to the WindClan border with Jadeheart at her tail. "Woah-" Dewpaw gave a huge sniff. "It smells really crisp and...and...rabbit-like." "Yeah, too much like WindClan..." Jadeheart trailed off. "It's a WindClan patrol!" Dewpaw exclaimed.

"Yeah, you've got a problem with it?" Fangpool growled. Dewpaw shrank back from the large warrior. "N-no..." She stuttered. "Look," Bloomtail scoffed. "It's a little warrior." Dewpaw blinked the hurt from her eyes. "I don't see *you* with an apprentice!" Bloomtail glared at her. "What are you doing near the border?" "Uh, showing my apprentice around the territory, you annoying ball of fur!"

"Oooohhh...." Dewpaw murmured. Jadeheart shifted uncomfortably under Echoclaw's piercing gaze. "Let's go, Dewpaw." Jadeheart steered Dewpaw away from the WindClan warriors. "Jadeheart....." Dewpaw whined. "Let's take a look at the training grounds." As Dewpaw nodded, Jadeheart realized how much she enjoyed mentoring.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 18

Jadeheart yawned and stretched her back. "Wow, I had no idea apprentices could keep a cat so busy!" Cloudwhisker nodded agreement. "I know. Great StarClan, Beechpaw is one of the best hunters in the Clan!" Jadeheart flicked her tail. "Yes, Dewpaw is very eager to fight, and she's good at it, too!

"I'm just glad that she understands that the duties of a warrior are more than just combat skills. Warriors-" "Can we go hunting now?" Dewpaw bounced on her paw pads. Jadeheart sat up and shook out her fur. "Yes, sure." Jadeheart pushed wearily through the bramble entrance.

Dewpaw perked her ears. "Did you hear that?" She meowed quietly. Jadeheart perked her ears towards where Dewpaw was listening. A distant scratching sound drifted from several fox-lengths away. "Yes...." Jadeheart peeked her head around a tree to spot a ferret scratching on the trunk of a tree.

"Can I catch it?" Dewpaw asked eagerly. Jadeheart nodded. "Sure. I'll be right here." Dewpaw waited silently behind a tree trunk while Jadeheart crouched behind a low-lying bush. Dewpaw bunched her muscles and pounced onto the ferret. It squealed and rolled back onto its back.

The ferret clawed at Dewpaw's soft belly desperately. "Claw its stomach or bite its neck!" Dewpaw obeyed and raked her claws across the ferret's stomach. The ferret lay limp, and Dewpaw picked it up awkwardly in her jaws. "Can we eat it?" She asked. "It's edible, I'm sure Sunray would love it!" Sunray and Bristlefur had recently moved to the elders den- Jadeheart hadn't realized how old they were.

Sunray's pelt was still glossy and sleek, though if Jadeheart looked closely at him, his muzzle was turning gray. Dewpaw puffed out her chest proudly as she hauled the ferret back into camp. "Wow,

Dewpaw, you caught that?" Frostfang asked, impressed. Dewpaw nodded, absorbing the praise.

"Well, is that for me?" Fireclaw bustled towards Dewpaw excitedly. "Well, it can be, if you can share with Sunray." "Did I hear my name?" Sunray meowed gruffly. Dewpaw nodded, shivering in the freezing wind. "Let's get inside your den," Jadeheart meowed, herding the elders back into their den.

Jadeheart felt warm instantly when she entered the den. Yellowstone sat up. "Hey, Jadeheart." "Hi." "Look what Dewpaw caught." "Dewpaw?" Riverrush sat up, squinting. "I thought Dewpaw was-oh, nevermind." Yellowstone shook her head. "Wrong Dewpaw, stupid furball," she teased, slapping him over the head with her tail.

"Dewstorm was nice." Fireclaw sat down. "I remember when she tried to catch a ferret." Fireclaw let out a chuckle. "I was so mad at her.....but it was a real good catch." Sunray looked up with a mouthful of ferret. "Just like this. Good job, Dewpaw!" Dewpaw beamed.

Jadeheart left Dewpaw with the elders and padded into the middle of camp, her limbs heavy. It felt like it had been moons since she had received a good nights' sleep. In the warriors den, Sparrowflight would snore, and Scatfur would murmur inaudible things in his sleep.

The other night, Drizzlespot had been stretching in his sleep, and his claws had dug into Jadeheart's back. Jadeheart took a short glance at the sky before deciding it was about time to see Moonrise. "Hey, Jadeheart. It's about time you've came. Here, sit down." With a sweep of her tail, Moonrise brushed all of the wilted herbs aside and patted the now-empty space with her paw.

Gratefully, Jadeheart plopped down, turning around so Moonrise could view the scratch. "I know, I know. It's annoying. The second you leave the medicine den, you have to come back again. You know enough about our healing methods to become a medicine cat, yourself!"

Jadeheart sat up, sending Moonrise's poultice splattering onto the

ground. "There's no way in StarClan I would ever want to become a medicine cat!" She shrieked. Moonrise was seething over the ultimate waste of precious herbs during Leaf-Bare. "Jadeheart! I would never ask you to become a medicine cat! And, oh, look what you've done!"

Jadeheart ducked her head against the hard rain and trudged back to her den, her paws soaking in mud each pawstep she took. Jadeheart stuck her head through the entrance to the warriors den. She found Sparkpelt dozing in her nest, Lightningstrike grooming herself beside her.

Cleartail was telling Peppernose about how he defeated some WindClan warriors, his voice rising occasionally to add suspense. "Where's Cloudwhisker and Drizzlespot?" Jadeheart murmured. A dark brown figure slid out of the shadows. "I'm right here," Drizzlespot meowed cheerfully.

Goldenstrike had became more likable since she had learned that she was expecting Cloudwhisker's kits, and she shrugged her shoulders. "I haven't seen him since he went on a border patrol with Sparrowflight, Sparkpelt, Drizzlespot, and Peppernose." The golden warrior meowed.

"Who are we talking about?" Starlight stood in the entrance to the warriors den, his silver pelt dripping wet. "Have you seen Cloudwhisker?" Drizzlespot asked. "Well, before it began to rain, I saw him leave camp." Starlight responded, trying to recall the memory.

Jadeheart shifted. "He's probably regretting ever leaving camp!" She meowed playfully, rolling over in her feather-lined nest. Dewpaw had been kind enough to sneak them into her nest last night, and Cleartail had made the comment that she had gotten an excellent apprentice.

Jadeheart was warmed with the praise of her apprentice; she had gotten a good one. Dewpaw was everything a mentor could ever want, sweet, energetic, smart, strong, and caring. Cleartail paw nudged her side. "Are you coming?" He meowed. "Huh?" Jadeheart asked groggily. "We're going to look for Cloudwhisker." He replied

with a hint of worry in his eyes. "He hasn't returned yet."

Jadeheart placed her paws carefully on the forest floor, not wanting the water level to rise too far above her paws. They were following Cloudwhisker's fading scent trail, which as leading them to....nowhere. Jadeheart's fur was drenched and dripping, and she couldn't feel her paws anymore.

"I promise you, I will leave ThunderClan if my littermate does, too." Jadeheart growled, determined to find Cloudwhisker. Drizzlespot brushed against her, sending droplets spraying to the ground. "He's probably just hunting." Jadeheart and every other cat on that patrol knew something was wrong. No cat in their right mind would want to hunt in the freezing Leaf-Bare rain. Cloudwhisker was in trouble.

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"Hello? Hello? Help!" The wailing voice belonged to Beechpaw. "Beechpaw! Call again!" Beechpaw wailed. "Help!!!" "He's here!" Cleartail yowled, hurrying behind a thicket of bramble bushes. Jadeheart's gasp caught in her throat.

Cloudwhisker was sprawled behind the thicket, his blood pooling with water. A huge gash gaped on his side, still letting blood spill over his fur. "Cloudwhisker!" Jadeheart yowled in despair. "He's breathing!" Sparkpelt meowed urgently. "I'm no medicine cat, but I think that he needs cobwebs!" Starlight, Jadeheart, and Cleartail dashed off at Drizzlespot's order.

Jadeheart dropped the cobwebs by Drizzlespot and allowed him to press the cobwebs to Cloudwhisker's flank. Jadeheart stroked her tail against Beechpaw's thick fur. Beechpaw was trembling hard, his whiskers quivering. "I'm sorry, it was my fault!" He cried. "No, no it was-" Jadeheart froze. Cloudwhisker's flanks fell still.

Jadeheart felt a wave of grief wash over her. *He's dead!* Starlight fell to the ground with a *thump*. "Dad! Cloudwhisker!" Starlight didn't move, and the only sign of his life was the rise and fall of his chest. "My son...." He moaned.

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"May you find good hunting, swift running, and shelter where you sleep. StarClan honored his bravery, saving several lives chasing

that badger away. He will always be loved, and never forgotten." Starlight murmured these words before Cloudwhisker's body.

"I cannot be deputy anymore." Starlight bowed his head. Flipstar cocked his head. "I know it's tough, but-" "No," Starlight's voice broke with grief. "I can't. I won't be responsible for this anymore, allowing him to leave the camp was the biggest mistake of my life."

Jadeheart stared blankly at Cloudwhisker's dead body. Moonrise and Adderjaw had done their best to hide his battle scars and blood, but they couldn't stitch up the huge gash in his skin. Cloudwhisker's blue eyes stared blankly at the sky, and not her stab of grief stabbed at Jadeheart like a thicket of brambles. *Like he died in,*

Flipstar dipped his head. "I respect your wish. The new deputy will be Clawbark, and Scatfur will be Beechpaw's new mentor." Beechpaw wailed after touching noses with Scatfur. "I don't want to have a new mentor!" He pressed his nose into Cloudwhisker's thick white fur. "I want Cloudwhisker!"

A stab of pain pricked Jadeheart's heart. "Cloudwhisker...he's gone." Drizzlespot meowed quietly. Starlight buried his head into his paws. Jadeheart gazed up at the stars. "This couldn't have been what you wanted," she whispered quietly. "Let's go." Cleartail attempted to steer Jadeheart away from Cloudwhisker, but she shrugged him off. "Let me stay." She growled. "Please,"

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"Shut your jaws before I claw your ears off," Scatfur growled. "But it's true! You were a kittypet!" Cleartail hissed. Scatfur had insulted Jadeheart's catch, and it had unnecessarily escalated out of control. Every cat in the Clan was tense, each looking for faults in each other that could lead to discovering Pondnose's murderer.

"I think you're forgetting that your mother is my sister," Growled Scatfur. With a yowl of fury, Cleartail sprang onto him, claws outstretched. Scatfur hissed, craning his neck to bite Cleartail's ear. "Stop! Stop! Stop!" Jadeheart yowled, trying to squeeze in between them. "What is happening?!" Clawbark hissed, hauling Cleartail off of Scatfur.

Jadeheart wrapped her tail protectively around her mate. "Scatfur was taunting him." She meowed. Clawbark bared his fangs at them both. "Clanmates don't fight each other! Now, Scatfur, don't you have an apprentice to mentor? And, Cleartail, be more mature! You're not an apprentice anymore!" Cleartail ducked his head, and Scatfur trudged away from camp.

Clawbark fluffed out his dark brown fur and scowled at them. Jadeheart watched Goldenstrike edge out of the nursery, her belly bulging. She gave Jadeheart a sad smile and twitched her ears in greeting. "Hey Jadeheart." She meowed quietly.

Jadeheart felt a pang of pity for the young queen. Her mate had died just a few sunrises ago, and Goldenstrike was still in pain from the loss of Cloudwhisker. "Hi. How are you feeling?" Goldenstrike bowed her head. "Fine." Jadeheart lay her tail on top of Goldenstrike's shoulder blades.

"I'm so sorry, I know it's hard," Goldenstrike nodded solemnly. "No, I'm sorry. It must be really hard to lose your littermate," Jadeheart smiled to her and slid her tail off of her back. "Tell me if you need anything." "Can't we elders ge some decent bedding around here?" Riverrush rasped.

Rufflepaw hurried over to the frail elder, taking his old moss out of camp and fetching some new moss for his nest. "Great StarClan, that feels good." Riverrush sighed, sinking into his nest. Jadeheart padded to the entrance where Cleartail was sulking. "Hey,want to go hunting?" Jadeheart asked. Cleartail nodded and sat up.

"So...it's sort of nice to have more mouths to feed." Jadeheart meowed. "Like I really have a place in this Clan." Cleartail nodded. "Queens have a place in this Clan, too." He meowed quietly. Jadeheart nodded. "Right." "Wouldn't you like to have kits?" Jadeheart scoffed. "No way. I'm too young."

Cleartail's fur ruffled. "We're just as old as Cloudwhisker and Goldenstrike are-were." Jadeheart bowed her head for a minute at the memory of her littermate. Jadeheart just laughed again. "Are you being serious?" She sputtered. Cleartail looked hurt. "Yes," he answered quietly.

Jadeheart shook her head. "No, sorry. I really like you, I'm just not ready-or old enough-to have kits. I haven't even trained my apprentice yet!" Despite the injured look in Cleartail's eyes, he pressed on. "I mean, just *look* at Dewpaw! Don't you want to be proud of your kits like that?" Jadeheart shook out her fur. "Well, yeah, I *guess.* I just don't feel ready to be a mother!"

Cleartail sucked in a breath. "Well, okay, tell me whenever you are." He padded away, and Jadeheart instantly felt guilty. *I hurt him.* She felt her shoulders slump and her tail droop. Jadeheart, feeling as if she had broke Cleartail's heart, padded back to camp, meeting Dewpaw at the entrance.

"Jadeheart, I have something to tell you." Dewpaw meowed solemnly. Jadeheart sat down next to Dewpaw, her tail wrapped around her paws. "I think you are underestimating me." In Jadeheart's whole life, she had never heard anything like that, ever. "I'm underestimating you?" Jadeheart asked gently.

"Yeah, I want to train with *you!* I'm tired of either you going easy on me or being paired up with Beechpaw or Rufflepaw! They're-" She leaned closer."A little weak." Jadeheart scoffed. "You-" She draped her tail over Dewpaw's shoulder. "Little one, are a little bit *strong.*"

Dewpaw's whiskers quivered. "You really think I'm strong? Can I see if I can beat you? Mom says you're one of the best fighters in ThunderClan!" Jadeheart's chest swelled with pride that cats actually said that about her. "Sure, but tomorrow. Your assignment today is to learn how to take a *break.*" Jadeheart flung a scrawny mouse at the young she-cat and smiled before stalking away.

Sparkpelt approached Jadeheart. "Wow, she seems like a pawful," Sparkpelt meowed. "Well, yeah. She can sometimes-" "Guess what???" Jadeheart raised an eyebrow. "What?" "I'm expecting kits!" "WHAT?" Jadeheart shrieked, before forcing her fur to lay flat. "Wow, that's great! Who's kits?" Sparkpelt gave her a friendly cuff around the ear. "Drizzlespot's, silly!"

Jadeheart suddenly felt very confused; she barley even noticed that they talked to each other. Jadeheart stumbled into the warriors den and staggered as she dropped into her nest, allowing sleep to

envelop her.

Jadeheart knew she was dreaming when she found herself standing in a long expanse of meadow. Cloudwhisker stood in the field, his starry pelt being ruffled by the wind, and his fluffy tail tip twitching. "Cloudwhisker!" Jadeheart brushed her pelt against his, purring loudly.

"Hello, Jadeheart." Despite the happy gleam in his sky blue eyes, his voice was solemn. "What-what's wrong?" Jadeheart stuttered. Cloudwhisker's gaze flickered. "Yes....." he took a deep breath. "Jadeheart, beware of the things around you. The cat who wanted to murder Starlight will plot to kill many more if he pleases."

Jadeheart felt a chill run down her spine. "Why did they want to kill Starlight?" She asked, as if it would be that easy. Cloudwhisker rolled his eyes to the sky. "Only StarClan knows," he sighed. "You are StarClan!" She yowled, frustrated that Cloudwhisker really was in StarClan.

"I mean the authorities of StarClan." Cloudwhisker responded. Jadeheart gave him a questionable glance. "The cats that have access to the Gazing Pool. Either they have great authority, or they are desperate to see their loved ones." "Do...do you have authority over the cats of StarClan?" Cloudwhisker snorted.

"No way! I did nothing to deserve it." Jadeheart felt her stomach knot. "But you died saving your Clan!" Cloudwhisker twitched an ear dismissively. "I died like a warrior. If that got me authority over StarClan, ever dead warrior who ever lived would have that kind of authority!"

Jadeheart sniffed loudly, drawing in Cloudwhisker's scent. "Well, I'll see you soon," Cloudwhisker meowed, his form fading. "No! I don't understand! Is my Clan in danger?" Cloudwhisker looked at Jadeheart regretfully, his blue eyes one of the only visible parts of his body. "I wish I could stay and protect my loved ones," his sad meow echoed in the suddenly empty meadow.

Jadeheart sat erect in her nest, clumps of moss stuck in her ears. She immediately pressed her head against her bedding, willing

herself to fall back to sleep. Jadeheart screwed her eyes shut, trying to block out anything in the waking world. *Cloudwhisker, please, come back!*

. . .

Jadeheart had volunteered to join the dawn border patrol, and Starlight had proudly assigned her to lead it. Jadeheart steered towards the WindClan border, Dewpaw, Twitchheart, Scatfur, and Beechpaw at her tail. "Can't we go and battle train?" Dewpaw complained. "No," Jadeheart answered firmly. "Border patrols are where your battle training may come to use." She meowed matter-of-factly.

Dewpaw's mud-brown fur ruffled with excitement. "Woah, I can't wait until I can show those scrawny balls of fur what I've learned!" Jadeheart let her gaze travel across the territory. The whole forest was coated with dew, glistening like StarClan territory.

Fronds were draped over several rocks, moss crawling over the stems. Mud bore old pawsteps that had been taken by Jadeheart's ancestors, making the path feel ancient. Below a slab of bark, small shoots of green perked from underneath. Jadeheart paused, pawing the wood out of the plants' way.

Dewpaw bounded over to Jadeheart, her jaws parted. "We're almost there!" Jadeheart approached the border, not seeing any WindClan patrols. Jadeheart paced along the border for any signs of trespassing, waiting for Scatfur to renew the scent markers. Jadeheart parted her jaws, sensing that WindClan was nearing the border.

Dewpaw bounced on her paws, springing up and down with anticipation. "Dewpaw, calm down." Jadeheart hissed, flicking her tail towards an open space beside her. "It's ThunderClan!" A small WindClan she-cat squeaked. "Rosepaw!" The WindClan tom made a shushing noise as if to calm her down.

Jadeheart drew her tongue over her lips and purred. It must be Rosepaw's first time seeing the territory. Dewpaw puffed out her pelt and hissed, causing Rosepaw's reddish-brownish fur to stick up. Jadeheart cast Dewpaw a glare and apologized to Rosepaw's mentor, Pricklepelt.

The WindClan she-cat dipped her head and stalked away from the border, muttering scornful phrases to Rosepaw as she walked. Dewpaw glared at them. "And don't ever come back!" She spat. Twitchheart looked amused, laying her tail across Dewpaw's shoulders.

"Dewpaw, they were on their own side of the border. Just like we are. They have full rights to be as close to the border as they want, as long as they stay on their own side of it." Jadeheart's fur prickled with unease, wondering which one of her Clanmates had plotted to kill her father.

The same thought seemed to loom over Jadeheart at every turn- *who can I trust?*

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 18
Jadeheart nudged a squirrel in front of Starlight's muzzle. "Eat. Please," she meowed quietly. Starlight blinked at her and wrinkled his nose. "No thank you, I just ate." Jadeheart knew that he hadn't, he had only been hunting for the past few sunrises, neglecting the necessity of eating.

"Come on, it wouldn't hurt to eat a bit more." Starlight sat up and waved his tail in the air, grimacing. "I'm fine, and it *would* hurt to eat more. I can tell this Leaf-Bare's going to be a hard one" Jadeheart sighed, looking into Starlight's lake-blue eyes.

Starlight had been worrying her, and most cats in the Clan since Cloudwhisker's death. "Eat." Jadeheart growled, pressing the squirrel closer to Starlight's face. It was still warm; Beechpaw had caught it just for him. "Leave the cat alone," Scatfur growled from the warriors den.

"If he doesn't want to eat, he won't eat." Jadeheart felt anger boil inside her due to Scatfur's crushing attitude. "How about you wait until Lightningstrike's starving to make that statement," Jadeheart meowed harshly. Scatfur's brow wrinkled at the name Lightningstrike for a moment.

"She's your mate, for StarClan's sake!" Scatfur shrugged and padded away. Bristlefur hobbled outside of the elders' den, Yellowstone by his side. "Young cats. They can't even remember their own mates. Wait until you get old, you remember everything....."

Bristlefur raised his head at the sight of his son. "Watcha doing? Aren't you supposed to be doing deputy duties?" Starlight sadly shook his head. "No," he murmured. "No?" Bristlefur rasped, nudging Starlight's scrawny ribs. "Clawbark's the deputy now," Yellowstone reminded him gently, her black and yellow pelt sending sun reflecting back onto the ground.

"Well, why not Starlight?" Bristlefur argued as if Starlight wasn't lying right beside him. "He's a fine young cat. Why, if Pondnose were here, she'd force him to eat some good prey and make Flipstar appoint him as deputy!" Yellowstone shook her head.

Pondnose isn't here, Jadeheart noticed that Frostfang was watching from a few fox-lengths away, chewing on her lip. "What's wrong?" Jadeheart asked her. Frostfang's jaw twitched before settling on the word 'nothing'. Jadeheart narrowed her eyes into slits but said nothing.

Cleartail was slinking out of camp, but Jadeheart caught up to him. "Huh?" He asked wearily, his ears flattened to his head. "Can we talk?" Cleartail flicked his ears and nodded. "Go right ahead." Jadeheart steered him out of camp and sat down.

"Do you, er, remember what you said?" Cleartail's eyes brightened, but he forced himself to look neutral. "I've said a lot of things," he muttered. "Yeah, but, er....you know." "No, I don't know," Cleartail growled. Jadeheart forced her fur to stay flat. "Do you want to, um....."

"Have kits?" Cleartail finished her sentence hopefully. "Yeah." Cleartail's eyes lit up like all the stars in Silverpelt were being contained there. "Yes!" He yowled, bursting back into camp. Embarrassment and excitement bubbled up inside of Jadeheart as Cleartail yowled the same phrase to the whole of ThunderClan. "Yes!"

. . .

As every Leaf-Bare is bound to be, it was dark and gloomy. Starlight was growing thinner, and Sparkpelt was growing closer to having Drizzlespot's kits. Outside of the nursery, Blurkit and Snakekit were play fighting.

Blurkit was a gray tom with blue eyes, and Snakekit was also a tom with white fur and amber eyes. Goldenstrike watched proudly from outside the nursery, her tail curled around her paws. Blurkit dodged Snakekit's clumsy blow, his tail sticking up in triumph.

Twitchheart was expecting Clawbark's kits, and the whole Clan was buzzing with excitement. "Here, catch my tail." Jadeheart raised her

tail not too far above Snakekit's head, waving it temptingly. She braced herself as Snakekit bunched his muscles and pounced. He wrapped his tiny paws around Jadeheart's tail and dragged it down a mouse-length before her tail slipped out of his grasp.

Snakekit gritted his teeth with frustration, baring his tiny fangs at Jadeheart's tail. Blurkit dashed by Snakekit, leaping into the air and sinking his razor-sharp claws into Jadeheart's tail. Jadeheart grimaced, her tail throbbing, but allowed Blurkit to pin it to the ground, puffing out his chest.

"Take that, Jadeheart!" Blurkit flung himself at her, only to slide weakly to the ground, his tiny paws trying to grip Jadeheart's pelt. "Hello, Jadeheart!" Sparkpelt peeked her head out of the nursery. "Why don't you come out here?" Jadeheart called to her. "It's good to get some fresh air."

Sparkpelt shook her head. "Drizzlespot's forbidden me to," she meowed laughingly. "He says I'm too close to kitting." Jadeheart scoffed. "I know Drizzlespot's just trying to protect you, but he's being unreasonable." Jadeheart notioned towards Goldenstrike's kits.

"Why don't you play with them, or at least sit beside them. After all, they *are* your littermate's kits." Sparkpelt sighed and padded warily into the open. "Don't worry, Drizzlespot's on a patrol." Sparkpelt laughed wearily. "Good, because I can't take too much more of that closed in nursery air." She said with a sigh.

"Hello, Sparkpelt!" The kits mewed, rearing up on their paws to reach her. Sparkpelt knelt down so the kits could climb on top of her, her eyes glittering with happiness. Jadeheart spun around as a cat called her name. Hawkpool had his paws planted into the ground, his gray pelt shimmering in the dim sunlight.

"What?" Jadeheart asked. "It's Scatfur." His claws kneaded the dirt repeatedly. "That annoying furball acts like he's Clan leader. He's not even the deputy!" Jadeheart let her fur lay flat. "What did he do?" She murmured. Hawkpool's fur ruffled, signaling that he was getting worked up.

"That mouse-heart! I can't believe him! I was leading the patrol towards my favorite hunting spot, knowing that there would be enough prey there to feed a few warriors. Then, Scatfur looked at me with widened eyes and mewed, 'I think it would be better if we hunted by the maple trees.

"The maple trees! I mean, you're not leading the patrol, and he had no idea what he was talking about! We hunted there last sunrise! Oh, and, guess what? THERE WAS NO PREY!!!" Hawkpool yowled. "Calm down, Hawkpool." Hawkpool flicked his tail angrily and stalked away.

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"Cats of ThunderClan!" Flipstar looked over his Clanmates who were assembled below him, his tail flicking in time with his ears. "I have had enough of WindClan thinking that they can trespass across our borders as long s they apologize. It's time to show them that they assumed wrong!"

Yowls of approval came from all over the camp. "It's about time," Peppernose muttered to Creamcall. Creamcall shifted uncomfortably. "I'm not sure I want my kits to go into battle yet." She whispered. Peppernose wrapped his tail around her. "Come on, they've been training for three moons." He meowed comfortingly.

"We'll ambush their camp at sunset, but avoid the nursery and the elders den. We aren't barbarians." Jadeheart's paws tingled with anticipation as Flipstar assigned cat's duties. "Clawbark and I will each lead a patrol. Clawbark's patrol will ambush from the entrance, and I will follow his patrol with mine close behind.

"Clawbark's will attack, and mine will defend them, which will ensure our chances of winning the battle." Flipstar paused, drawing in a breath. "Frostfang, Mudfur, Sparrowflight....." he continued naming off cats that would go on his patrol before naming the others of Clawbark's.

Jadeheart was excited to be in the attacking patrol. Starlight's neck fur spiked. "Why can't I go?" He meowed gruffly. Flipstar twitched his ears. "You're in no condition to fight." He responded merrily. "But....I am." Starlight's voice faltered. "You shouldn't have neglected eating prey if you wanted to participate."

Starlight dipped his head and padded past Jadeheart. He picked up a squirrel and sat down to eat it sulkily. Jadeheart sat next to Drizzlespot, who was on her patrol. "I hope we win the battle," Drizzlespot meowed after a while. Jadeheart snorted, looking down at her paws. "Yeah, this is my first actual attack."

Suddenly, Dewpaw came spinning into view, Rufflepaw by her side. Rufflepaw's orange pelt was spiked with excitement. "This is going to be AWESOME!!!!" Dewpaw roared, rearing up on her hind paws. Jadeheart laughed gently, looking up at the apprentices from the leaf-covered ground.

"I don't know about that, but remember that you guys are a team, an you should help others when they need help." Jadeheart purred, sitting up. "Let's go!" Flipstar and Clawbark were standing near the entrance, letting their Clanmates gather around them. Dewpaw and Rufflepaw bounded over to Clawbark, chattering like a pair of starlings.

Jadeheart's stomach clenched as she walked past the WindClan border, but her Clanmates didn't seem affected. Peppernose shifted from beside her as the trees thinned out, leaving the two patrols to slink through WindClan territory in plain sight.

Dewpaw strode carelessly through the moor, her head bobbing up and down with her pawsteps. WindClan scent grew stronger, and Jadeheart knew that they were approaching the camp. Even Dewpaw and Rufflepaw fell silent and began slinking through the tall grass.

"ThunderClan!" A tom hissed from the camp. Flipstar whipped his head around, surveying his warriors. "Attack!" Battle cries sounded as ThunderClan warriors streamed into the camp. "Owlstar! Get Owlstar!" Jadeheart sprang at a young tom who's fur was bedraggled from what appeared to be sleep.

Jadeheart sank her teeth into his flesh, warm blood flooding into her mouth. The tom hissed in pain and whipped around, throwing himself on top of her. Jadeheart let herself fall limp, but the tom only raised a paw over her throat. A fright-endured swing of her hind legs onto the tom's stomach sent him to the ground.

Two young apprentices yowled with fury and jumped onto Jadeheart, one on her back and the other under her belly. She cringed as the she-cat raked her claws across Jadeheart's stomach before rearing up and planting her paws onto the other apprentice's back.

She shoved him onto the ground and raked her claws down his back. The tom grunted in pain and ran to help one of his Clanmates. "Jadeheart, look out!" Scatfur screeched, barreling into a white warrior. Owlstar was already in the air, his claws outstretched towards Jadeheart.

Jadeheart yelped, and, in a flash, flipped over onto Owlstar's stomach. *Wow, I'm fighting the Clan leader!* Jadeheart knocked a sturdy paw against Owlstar's chin, sending his head thumping to the ground. "How dare you-" she dug her teeth into Owlstar's haunches. "Allow your warriors to-"

A large ginger tom barreled into Jadeheart's side with a growl. Jadeheart's breath was drove out of her chest, and she struggled under his huge paws to breathe. "Drizzlespot," She wheezed, her paws flailing helplessly underneath her. Suddenly, air rushed into her lungs which she breathed in gratefully.

Jadeheart looked up to see Cleartail, his flanks rising and falling at a rapid speed. "Thanks," Jadeheart meowed, giving Cleartail a tiny smile. Cleartail offered her a curt nod before flinging himself back into the middle of the battle. Jadeheart scanned the battle for any Clanmates in need.

Drizzlespot was grappling with a scrawny WindClan she-cat, and he seemed to be winning. Jadeheart let her gaze travel over to Sparrowflight, who was pressed against the ground near the fresh-kill pile. Jadeheart barreled into the WindClan cat silently, ramming into his stomach.

The tom doubled over with a grunt of pain. Jadeheart knew better than to let him get back up again, and she dug her claws into his shoulders, heaving herself on top of him. The tom sprang up, and flung himself back onto the ground, crushing Jadeheart.

Sparrowflight heaved the tom off of Jadeheart, wincing as his claws snagged her ear. Jadeheart made sure Sparrowflight had control of the situation before she turned to a yellow she-cat, her fangs bared. The she-cat shied away, her tail bushed out and her eyes narrowed into slits.

"I think they've learned not to trespass onto ThunderClan territory again." Flipstar yowled, nearing the entrance. Reluctant to retreat, ThunderClan warriors filed out of the entrance at their own pace, yowls of fury following them. Jadeheart followed her Clanmates as they broke into a sprint several fox-lengths away from the camp.

Jadeheart sat beside the fresh-kill pile, picking a plump squirrel for herself. Cleartail sat beside her with a mouse, gnawing on it eagerly. "You look quite hungry," Jadeheart meowed humorously. Cleartail stopped eating and looked at her, as if he was confused. "Not as hungry as you should be," he responded. "You *did* go on the patrol to catch all of this."

Cleartail pushed his mouse towards Jadeheart. "You should have it." He meowed. Jadeheart laughed gently and ate the rest of it without hesitation. "If it pleases you," Flipstar sat nearby, half of the Clan gathered around him. "We have an apprentice that fought like a true ThunderClan warrior against WindClan.

"Dewpaw, please step forward. Dewpaw, you have shown great courage fighting against WindClan-" "And they have the scars to prove it!" Rufflepaw meowed supportively. "Jadeheart, has Dewpaw trained to learn the ways of StarClan's noble code, and has she learned the ways of a warrior?" Jadeheart gazed proudly at Dewpaw, though she wished that she could've spent more time with her.

"She has." Jadeheart's voice rang throughout the camp. "Then by the powers of StarClan, you shall now be known as Dewwing. This will be a constant reminder to not just you, but everyone, that warriors don't fight just to win a battle. Sometimes we have to admit we're wrong and take flight."

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Starlight let out a deep purr. It was the middle of Leaf-Bare, but, unlike his Clanmates, Starlight was growing more plump, due to

him eating more after the battle. Sparkpelt edged past Twitchheart, who was lying lazily outside of the nursery. Sparkpelt sat next to Jadeheart with a weary sigh, her flame-like tail wrapped around her paws.

It had been a moon since Sparkpelt's kits had been born. Parsleykit was a reddish-brownish tom with brilliant green eyes, Firkit was a dark brown tom with green eyes, and he looked a lot like Drizzlespot, though Drizzlespot's eyes were blueish-yellow. Fallenkit was a she-kit who looked almost identical to Sparkpelt, but she had been born with a front leg that was slightly shorter from the rest.

Fallenkit didn't seem particularly bothered by her handicap, but Sparkpelt was convinced that Fallenkit would be forced to become a medicine cat because of her disfigurement. "It'll make it hard for her to do battle moves with her leg, and I don't want to make her feel like she's out of place." Sparkpelt meowed anxiously, watching Fallenkit grapple with Snakekit in a play-fight.

"She looks like a fighter to me," Jadeheart meowed quietly, as if afraid to speak her mind. Sparkpelt sighed loudly. "I know! I'm just afraid that if she tries and she fails, then she'll never be treated the same again." Sparkpelt's voice fell to a whisper. "I don't want to see her get hurt."

Jadeheart gazed at the other kits kindly. Blurkit and Snakekit didn't *look* like the kind of cats that would participate in bullying. Blurkit was extremely patient and kind, and Snakekit could be aggressive at times, but only because he wanted to look tough. "StarClan knows best," Jadeheart murmured, only loud enough for Sparkpelt to hear.

Beechnose whisked past Jadeheart, carrying a scrawny mouse. "I caught it," he growled shakily, glaring at his prey. "That little rat...." Beechnose hissed, narrowing his green eyes. All morning, Beechnose had been trying to catch a mouse in the medicine cat den. He had swore to Adderjaw that it was trying to eat his precious stores.

Sparkpelt widened her eyes at Jadeheart. "If I didn't know better, I'd think that some of our Clanmates are going insane from the lack of prey." Jadeheart had learned to ignore the gnawing hunger in her

stomach, usually just going hunting instead of eating to relieve it, but some cats hadn't and Beechnose was one of them.

Beechnose's littermate, Rufflefur, followed close behind him carrying a robin. "Woah, where did you find that?" Rufflefur turned and shrugged. "Near the entrance. There's a whole nest of eggs in the brambles! I told Clawbark, and he assigned Lightningstrike to watch them until a few sunrises after they hatch, then kill them."

Jadeheart was half horrified and half impressed at her Clanmates' methods of getting prey this Leaf-Bare. The wind bit at Jadeheart worse than her hunger, and she pressed a paw at Sparkpelt's ribcage. "I'm going to see if I can manage a nap in the warriors den," she meowed. Sparkpelt nodded. "Goldenstrike already has her kits inside the nursery. I'm going to get Fallenkit, Firkit, and Parsleykit inside."

Jadeheart ducked her head and flattened her ears against the wind in order to dull her pounding headache. When she ducked into the warriors den, she saw Hawkpool, Starlight, Peppernose, Frostfang, and Dewwing nestled into their nests. All of them were sound asleep except for Frostfang. Frostfang was looking somewhat regretfully around at the den, her jaws working in her cheek.

With a second glance at Frostfang, Jadeheart lay down in her nest and allowed herself to drift into a comforting dream.

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Jadeheart had hoped to see Dewstorm or Cloudtail, even if their only purpose was to bring a bad omen. Despite her wishes, Jadeheart found herself in a field. A blue tom sat in front of her, his expression forlorn. He gazed at his paws with sad night-sky-blue eyes and drew his tongue absently across his lips.

Suddenly, the tom whipped his head up and yowled, "Beware! You know who confused Ravenstar, and you *must* alert your Clan of the danger he poses!" Jadeheart jumped in surprise, her bodily organs doing the same. "I am Creekwind of ThunderClan, and I-"

"Creekwind! Stop scaring this young warrior!" Jadeheart seemed as startled and surprised as the jet-black tom as they recognized each other. "I apologize, Jadeheart." Ravenstar's-or Ravenpelt's- gaze now

glistened emerald green with lively ness, and his new life in StarClan had taken away the gray look from his muzzle and the droop in his shoulders and tail.

The tom's pelt was now darker and sleek, dappled with small stars, and he was almost unrecognizable from what Jadeheart had last seen him as. A lump formed in her throat, but she couldn't get out the words *I'm sorry*. Creekwind glared at Ravenstar. "I wish you would take me seriously!" He growled, beginning to pace.

"I'm telling you, that.....*cat* is going to try to kill Starlight again! *Read the stars!*" Creekwind hissed in a low tone. Ravenstar sighed. "Creekwind, we *are* the stars. And, stop being superstitious! There's no place for your negativity in StarClan." With a flick of his tail, Creekwind stalked away.

"Ravenstar, I'm really-" "No, I'm sorry. I left you scared of me and horrified with the belief that you killed me." "But I *did!"* Jadeheart meowed, her heart heavy. "No, you didn't. I brought it upon myself."

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 19

Jadeheart knew she was going to have her kits soon, and she was no sitting in the nursery with Twitchheart and her kit, her head in her paws. Dawnkit scrambled over Twitchheart in a flash, trying to catch her tail. With paws outstretched, her claws latched onto her tail and she tried to grab it with her mouth.

Dawnkit let out a yelp of pain and struggled to unhook her claws from her tail unsuccessfully. Dawnkit was always playing games like this since her littermate, Foamkit, had died at three moons old. A pang of grief hit her as she remembered the gray tom and how he used to play with Jadeheart constantly.

The whole Clan was devastated at his death, but, Twitchheart had been the first to push past her grief to care for Dawnkit. Jadeheart was jolted back to reality when Dawnkit barreled into her, still grappling with her tail. "Jadeheart," Dawnkit squeaked. "Jadeheart, help!"

Gently, Jadeheart pried Dawnkit's claws off of her tail. Dawnkit's tabby pelt brushed against hers, sending small vibrations against Jadeheart's flank as she purred as loud as the small kit could. Twitchheart's tail tip flicked happily against her bedding rythemically, her eyes content.

Suddenly, the entrance to the nursery shook, causing Jadeheart to tense. Blurpaw burst into the nursery, his gray fur ruffled from running. He panted heavily, dropping two scrawny mice on the ground, one by Twitchheart and one in front of Jadeheart. "Look what I found!" The tom exclaimed proudly, pawing Twitchheart's mouse closer to her.

"Thank you," Jadeheart breathed. "That must've been hard to find." Blurpaw nodded, his whiskers twitching with excitement. "Oh, it was. I was with Beechnose." He shook out his fur and lowered himself to the ground. "The forest was silent, and it seemed empty.

Beechnose was giving up hope of finding prey today, and he suggested we head back to camp.

"And I was like, 'no way!' And he was all like 'we have to,'. But I stood my ground, sensing a mouse in a berry bush. I dove underneath an-" "Blurpaw!" Goldenstrike hissed. "I'm sure they would rather not hear your ridiculous storytelling," Goldenstrike meowed harshly, ushering him away from the nursery.

"No, I like it!" Dawnkit mewed. "Oh, you do now?" Blurpaw's meow softened to a light whisper. Dawnkit's head bobbed up and down. "Come on, I'll tell you the rest of the story!" As Dawnkit scrambled out of her nest, Twitchheart rolled her eyes at them, exasperated.

Jadeheart let out a soft laugh, standing up to bask in the dim sunlight. Outside of the nursery, Jadeheart could see Sunray curled up next to Fireclaw and Bristlefur, each of them taking turns telling their tales. "Hello, Jadeheart!" Sunray meowed cheerfully, waving his tail in the air. Jadeheart padded towards him and sat.

Fireclaw's fur puffed out. "....and that's why Riverrush is always so crumpy!" "What did you just call me?" Riverrush rasped, his blue-gray pelt glistening in the sun, giving it the appearance of water. "He called you crumpy," Fallenpaw hobbled by, her expression revealing her aggravated feelings.

Before Fallenpaw could pass her, Jadepaw lay her tail on Fallenpaw's shoulders without a word, signaling to her that they would talk after the elders were done doing so. "What in StarClan's name is *crumpy?*" Riverrush looked confused, his blue eyes clouded with age.

Fireclaw stuttered. "Yeah, er, crumpy, um....it means delightful." Riverrush rolled his eyes. "I don't know if you think I'm a dull old furball or not, but I'm certainly not a mouse-brain!" Sunray laughed lightly. "It means cranky and grumpy." "Is that so, Fireclaw?" There was a breezy tone in Riverrush's voice, but he sized up on Fireclaw.

The frail elder looked into Fireclaw's eyes, and Fireclaw blew out a puff of air. "Sorry," he meowed in a mock-annoyed tone. Fallenpaw glanced at Jadeheart, confused. As Jadeheart steered the young

apprentice away, she began talking. "What's wrong?"

Fallenpaw answered without hesitation. "Sparkpelt is being so unreasonable, I don't see why I must be a medicine cat, I hate it! If any cat, she should be the medicine cat! I didn't make myself this way." Her eyes blazed with anger and confusion, and Fallenpaw was trembling.

"Sparkpelt's just looking out for you," Jadeheart immediately knew she shouldn't have said that, and she regretted her words. "She doesn't know what I want!" Fallenpaw lashed out, her ears flattening. "I don't want her making my life choices for me! She's just jealous she doesn't have *my* life!"

Jadeheart knew that wasn't it, but Fallenpaw was fuming, so she gave Fallenpaw a comforting lick across her fur. "It's alright. You should talk to Sparkpelt." Fallenpaw turned tail and stalked away. "Oh my StarClan," Jadeheart gasped all of the sudden, causing Fallenpaw to turn around. "The kits are coming!"

Fallenpaw rushed towards Jadeheart, instructing Firpaw to fetch a stick. "Where's.....Moonrise and Adderjaw?" Jadeheart meowed. Fallenpaw looked distressed. "They said that they were going on an emergency visit to ShadowClan," she meowed. Clawbark sprang up along with Lightningstrike and Starlight.

"I'll get them!" He meowed, rushing out of camp. Jadeheart looked up to the sky. "Great StarClan, a seven-moon-old apprentice is going to deliver my kits!" Yellowfang guided her back to the nursery. "I'm a very experienced queen, and I'm sure I can help." Fallenpaw looked frustrated. "All I know about is herbs!" She wailed.

"Then get some!" Cleartail snapped with an angry flick of his tail. Jadeheart let out a low moan, praying to StarClan that Yellowstone knew what she was doing.

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Beside Cleartail, Jadeheart gazed down at her newborn kits happily. "What are we going to name them?" Cleartail murmured, not wanting to ruin the moment. Jadeheart indicated with her tail towards the small light gray she-cat with one white paw and the other a dark gray. "Puddlekit, she'll be named Puddlekit."

Cleartail purred. "That's beautiful." He meowed softly sweeping his tail towards a dark black tom with white patches. "I wonder how he got his color," he wondered aloud. Jadeheart thought for a second before realizing that Starlight's mother had looked just like this. "Twilightpelt, I think." Jadeheart whispered.

"Anyways, what do you want to name him?" Jadeheart prompted. Cleartail didn't hesitate answering. "He should be named Trailkit," he said, studying a white trail traveling from his right ear down to the middle of his back.

Jadeheart let out a deep purr. She knew what they would name the last kit: a multi-pattered she cat with a brown tabby coat and white near her head, a white streak marking her back. Brown ears accented her pure white face, and she was beautiful. "Sorrelkit," they both murmured in unison.

Sorrelkit was a great name, and seeing her kits, finally, warmed Jadeheart from ears to tail tip. After a while, Cleartail upped and left the den, reluctantly, of course. "Goodbye, my love." He whispered softly. Jadeheart looked at Trailkit. "You kits will go far," She murmured. "Be like Dewstorm and Starlight. They seemed to fit in," she meowed, her voice trailing off.

She barley even noticed Dawnkit and Twitchheart lingering in the corner of the den. For a second, Jadeheart tensed and screwed her eyes shut, half expecting to die like her mother did. Slowly, Jadeheart opened a cloudy eye. *I truly hope you're proud of me, Dewstorm. I try. I really want to make you proud.*

Peaceful with her three kits laying at her side, Jadeheart shut her eyes.

. . .

Puddlekit flicked her tail. "You were leader last time! I'm tired of being WindClan." Sorrelkit narrowed her eyes at her littermate. "You're only WindClan because it's fair! I was WindClan, now it's your turn!" Trailkit hung next to Jadeheart, drawing his paw absently through the dirt.

"Trailkit, do you want to be WindClan?" Jadeheart asked gently, using her forepaw to lift Trailkit's head from the ground. "No,

thanks." Trailkit rolled onto his back and twisted to get a better look at his back. "Is something wrong?" Jadeheart meowed, sitting up.

The small tom shook his head. "No, I just want to see why you named me Trailkit." "Well, sometimes you aren't an exact representation of your name. Like, look at Sorrelkit. Does she look like a sorrel leaf to you?" Puddlekit sneered, gesturing to Sorrelkit's long legs and skinny frame. "Well, yeah."

"Hey!" Sorrelkit mewed, casting a glare at her sister. "Mom!" Jadeheart turned to Sorrelkit. "She called me a sorrel leaf." Sorrelkit whimpered, giving Puddlekit a scornful glance. "Yes, Sorrelkit, I heard." "Don't call me that!" Sorrelkit lifted her head. "Call me....Skykit. The sky's the limit."

Jadeheart sighed. "As inspirational as that is, me and Cleartail like your name and we gave it to you for a reason." Sorrelkit widened her rounded green eyes. "Because I look like a sorrel leaf?" She whispered. Trailkit snorted. "You look nothing like an herb." He muttered.

"Your brother's right." Jadeheart meowed firmly, fixing the two littermates with a freezing stare. At that moment, Cleartail bounded into the den. "How are my little warriors?" He cooed, touching noses with each of them and licking Jadeheart on her forehead. "Great!" Puddlekit piped up, lifting her white paw off of the ground gingerly.

"Good." Cleartail dragged in a huge starling from outside the den. "Great StarClan!" Sorrelkit exclaimed, before shrinking into her pelt at the use of her language. "Where did you get that?" "It's about New-Leaf, the time of restoration." Cleartail meowed dismissively. "Where did you get it?" Jadeheart repeated her question persistently.

Cleartail sighed. "It really wasn't that much trouble....." Jadeheart purred. "How long did it take you to catch it?" Cleartail heaved a huge breath. "Since sunrise." "The sun's setting!" "I know, I just wanted the kits' first taste of prey to be special." Jadeheart's purr was drowned out by excited squealing. "We get to eat all of that?"

"Wow, that bird is huge enough to scoop us up and carry us out of camp!"

Jadeheart stiffened at Trailkit's comment and tried to nudge them away from the entrance of the den. "Go ahead!" Cleartail urged the now hesitant kits to eat the bird. "But it's so....sad." Sorrelkit mewed quietly. Jadeheart snorted. "Well, if you want to live to be an apprentice, you'd better get used to it." Puddlekit's eyes widened.

"You mean....you'd kill us?" Puddlekit mewed quietly, trembling. "No, no no no! I would never do that! I mean, when you become an apprentice, you will have to eat prey." Puddlekit looked embarrassed "Oh, I knew that." She muttered under her breath.

. . .

Jadeheart drew her tongue over Trailkit, who looked anxiously around to see if any cat was watching. "Mom!" He protested, writhing under her rasping tongue as Dawnpaw slid out of the apprentice den. Jadeheart stopped cleaning him and turned to Puddlekit, who was also glancing around nervously.

"Please hurry! Why couldn't you have done me in the den with Sorrelkit?" "Because you were too busy playing with Trailkit." Jadeheart replied, licking bits of moss and twigs out of her fur. "What did you do, explore the territory early?" Jadeheart muttered, parting her jaws to let a twig drop to the ground.

Puddlekit squirmed. "Mom, stop!" The young she-cat tumbled out of Jadeheart's grasp, settling down as Flipstar called for a Clan meeting. Firpaw and Parsleypaw burst out of the apprentice den before sitting beside Dewwing, still chattering with each other.

"Cats of ThunderClan, we have three kits who have reached the age of six moons and are ready to be apprenticed! Puddlekit, please step forward." Puddlekit pushed through the the crowd of cats and neared Flipstar, trembling like a leaf being tossed in the wind.

"Puddlekit, you will now be known as Puddlepaw, and your mentor will be Frostfang. Frostfang, you are a skilled and experienced warrior. I expect you to pass on all your knowledge to this new apprentice." Frostfang dipped her head and padded towards Puddlepaw at a measured pace.

Puddlepaw walked hurriedly up to Frostfang and touched noses with her hastily as if she was about to disappear. With a snort of amusement, Jadeheart turned her head back to Flipstar. "Sorrelkit....."

Sorrelkit was older now, with a patrol of Starlight, Scatfur, Clawbark, and Peppernose. They stood on the border, apparently snarling at each other. Scatfur bunched his muscles and attacked a cream-colored she-cat. The she-cat seemed surprised, but she immediately recovered and dug her teeth into Scatfur's flank.

Starlight plunged in to the battle, claws outstretched. The older Sorrelkit got knocked to the ground, a huge tom holding a paw over her chest. "No!" Jadeheart screeched before realizing where she actually was.

Hawkpool froze in front of Trailpaw and stared at Jadeheart. "Is...is something wrong?" He asked, looking up at Flipstar. "Oh, no. Nevermind." Jadeheart pressed her muzzle against her chest, embarrassed. The crowd dispersed as if the meeting was over.

"Jadeheart, are you okay?" Cleartail asked worriedly. Jadeheart shook her head, shaking off the image. "Nothing." After a few seconds, Jadeheart murmured "Sorry." Cleartail's concerned gaze faded into his normal look as he stared up at Highrock. "I'm going to ask if I can go on the dawn patrol with Firpaw," he meowed, leaving Jadeheart standing in the middle of camp.

"Don't you just feel....empty when your kits become apprentices?" Yellowstone's wispy voice floated into Jadeheart's ear, her breath warming her neck. "Um...no." Yellowstone laughed under her breath. "You seemed sort of upset when Trailpaw got apprenticed,"

She meowed softly, her eyes angled slightly downward to meet Jadeheart's. "Sorry," she whispered. Yellowstone's eyes flashed with amusement. "Why are you apologizing to me? Say that to Flipstar." Jadeheart's stomach flipped. "Oh, okay." With her head down, Jadeheart trudged towards Flipstar's den.

Inside, Flipstar sat with Clawbark, discussing something. Not wanting to interrupt, she sat patiently outside the den. "......she was

acting suspicious." "Sparrowflight? Why would-" "Oh, hello Jadeheart!" Clawbark meowed. "I hope I wasn't interrupting anything," Jadeheart said, taking a step closer.

Flipstar shook his head. "No, what do you need?" "I...I just wanted to apologize for interrupting the ceremony." Jadeheart meowed quietly, shuffling her paws awkwardly. "No, it's alright. But I have something to talk to you about." Flipstar watched Clawbark pad silently out of the den from the corner for his eye.

Jadeheart sat down without a word, her tail waving nervously behind her. "Jadeheart, I have noticed your....skill." Jadeheart sat up straighter. "Skill?" She echoed Flipstar's words under her breath. "Yes, battle skill. I wish that I could grant you another apprentice, but, I'm afraid Sparrowflight's kits won't be due for a few moons."

Jadeheart's pelt warmed at his praise. "Th-thank you." She stumbled over her words like an excited apprentice. Flipstar nodded. "You're welcome." Flipstar meowed to Jadeheart as she padded out of the den. Jadeheart walked over to where Starlight sat with Drizzlespot eating a mouse.

"I'm glad New-Leaf is finally coming around, I'm starving." Starlight said, looking at Jadeheart. She rolled her eyes and joined her father. Starlight had been constantly patrolling and eating all Leaf-Bare, and he was far from starving. Frostfang padded over, a scrawny squirrel dangling from her jaws.

"May I join you guys?" She asked. Drizzlespot sat up and gave Frostfang a tail-length of room between him and Starlight. "I didn't think I was *that* fat!" Frostfang snapped, gaping at the space. "Oh, um, sorry...?" Drizzlespot mumbled. Frostfang shook out her fur. "Sorry, I've been really moody lately."

Jadeheart made a silent agreement, remembering how she had snapped at Beechnose when he had accidentally bumped into her, handling several pawfulls of moss. Leaf-Bare was always dreary, and hopefully New-Leaf would lift her Clanmate's spirits.

Dark Skies- Book #2 in Sunrise

Chapter 20
Jadeheart sat in camp next to Creamcall, basking in the weak sun. Clouds shifted over the remaining rays, promising rain later in the day. A small wind blew just hard enough to ruffle Jadeheart's fur and set the elders off complaining.

"If we can't get sunlight, I would've at least hoped to keep my pelt neat!" Sunray grumbled, licking dirt and sand out of his fur. Jadeheart narrowed her eyes as a spray of dirt scattered across camp, sailing through the air. Several apprentices mumbled about not getting to see a decent day of sunlight in their lifetime, trudging back to their den.

They sound just like elders. Jadeheart thought, watching Scatfur and Frostfang slip through the entrance to go and hunt. Trailpaw padded up to Jadeheart, his head down and his paws dragging. "What's wrong?" "Nothing," he grumbled. "Trailpaw, look at me." Trailpaw slowly brought his face into view, revealing smeared blood across his muzzle that belong to himself.

Jadeheart gasped. "What happened?" She meowed, resisting the urge to clean it off of his face. Trailpaw's eyes reflected sadness. "Snakepaw didn't know that I was so...*weak,* and he lunged at me during battle training. I fell to the ground and knocked my jaw onto a sharp rock. I'm heading to the medicine den."

Jadeheart felt pity for the smallest of her kits gnaw at her stomach. "You're not weak, Snakepaw's bigger than you." She insisted. Trailpaw just nodded and trudged past her. "Why is everybody so low in spirits?" Rufflefur wondered out loud from behind Jadeheart. "I don't know,"
. . .
Scatfur burst into the entrance of camp carrying a squirrel. "Good, you caught something!" Riverrush meowed grumpily. "Well, I *would've* if WindClan hadn't have stolen it!" Scatfur spat. Jadeheart noticed small bite marks dotting the rabbits' fur.

"What?!?" Flipstar roared. "Wait." Starlight edged closer to Scatfur. "How do we know it's-" Scatfur didn't let him finish, thrusting the rabbit at him. "Do you *smell* WindClan on it?" Starlight's blue eyes betrayed growing rage. "Yes,"

Clawbark narrowed his eyes. "It's settled. I'm sending a patrol out with Scatfur." Starlight looked determined. "Let me go." "Me too." Jadeheart meowed. Suddenly, Scatfur, Rufflefur, Dewwing, Jadeheart, and Starlight were lined up at the camp entrance.

"Let's go!" Scatfur called, charging out of camp. The WindClan border wasn't too far off, and at a rapid pace the patrol crashed through the forest. Scatfur froze, glaring across the border at a group of six WindClan warriors. "Did you steal our prey?" He growled.

Needlenose sniffed. "Oh, yeah, it was delicious." Dewwing narrowed her eyes. "She *did!*" Glowwhisker looked meaningfully at the ThunderClan patrol. "Why would we?" Starlight's expression became confused. "Um...I don't know...maybe to eat?" He spat.

Jadeheart flattened her ears. "Quit playing dumb quickly before I claw your ears off!" A she-cat who's name Jadeheart did not know stepped forward, her teeth bared. "When my Clanmates say they didn't do something, they didn't." She spat. With a final glower at Needlenose, Scatfur straightened. "Attack!"

At his word, the patrol jumped at the bewildered WindClan cats. Immediately, Jadeheart latched her claws into a ginger tom's fur, dug them in, and threw him to the ground. The tom hissed, but she could hear him over Starlight's screech. Through the thick of the battle, Jadeheart couldn't see her father, and she fought her way towards the distant hisses that she knew were his.

Needlenose blocked her path, her grayish-reddish fur standing on end. "I don't know what kind of cats are in your Clan, but in our Clan, we tell the truth. And if my Clanmates say that they didn't take your prey, then, for Star-" Jadeheart lunged at the she-cat, claws outstretched, and barreled into her with a yowl.

Needlenose toppled over, but she dug her claws into Jadeheart's

shoulders. Ripples of pain swept over her, but Jadeheart managed to swipe at Needlenose's muzzle, causing blood to bead on her nose. Needlenose let out a hiss of pain and pushed her away.

Jadeheart turned back to Starlight, which she could now see slumped against a tree. Nearby, Scatfur lay limp on the ground. Glowwhisker was sent away with his Clanmates with a ferocious swipe to the head from Dewwing, leaving the ThunderClan warriors alone.

"Starlight! Starlight!" Jadeheart cried, searching her father's eyes for any response. The tom's heart raced, but it was weak, and he was dying. Starlight looked up at Jadeheart with clouded eyes. "I'm going to meet your mother," he meowed softly, his gaze turning wistful.

"Look." Behind her, a nearly transparent image of Dewstorm formed. Dewstorm purred quietly, padding towards Starlight. Starlight looked lovingly at his mate, and Dewstorm rubbed against him. At that moment, all of the life faded from Starlight's eyes, and they stared right past Jadeheart.

"Dad!" She cried. Jadeheart whipped around to face Scatfur, who was being sat up by Rufflefur. "*You,*" she growled, her voice shaking. "I should've known it was you, the hateful tom who glowers at frail elders and abandons his mate!" Jadeheart laughed at herself underneath her breath. "Put him down!" She screeched, knocking Rufflefur's paw out from under Scatfur's head.

Scatfur grunted and winced in pain, but said nothing. Dewwing stood by, looking revolted and scared. Jadeheart fixed her gaze on Scatfur. "The cat who came into the Clan with an unreasonable hatred for my father. I can't believe you'd take advantage of cats like Ravenstar!"

Jadeheart shook her head slowly with disgust, but never broke her piercing stare. Scatfur held her gaze, but his deep green eyes looked weary. "The worst part is, I'm right." Jadeheart thrust her muzzle into Scatfur's face. "Aren't I?" Scatfur angled his gaze at the ground, his whiskers trembling.

Jadeheart pulled back. "You did! You killed an elder instead of my father, your ultimate goal." She flicked her tail at Starlight. "Are you happy now?" She screeched. "Are you?" She narrowed her eyes, realizing that everything around her had fell silent. Rufflefur had backed away from Scatfur, her eyes wary.

"Everyone knows now! They're disgusted, you know?" Jadeheart carried on after waiting for an answer. "I'm revolted! Revolted!" Scatfur looked up a her with despair. "I-I'm sorry!" He cried. "She's right!" He banged his head onto the rough ground. "I deserve to die this way."

Rufflefur took a hesitant step forward to assist him. "No, leave me here. There's no use in burying me, anyways, if all that's going to happen is I get exiled." Dewwing looked at him sadly. "He's right! He deserves it. I am not going to let him die under the influence of poppy seeds or any other herb.

"He deserves to die just how Starlight and Pondnose did: in agony. Leave him be!" Jadeheart hissed, the hatred ringing clearly in her voice. "Jade-" "No, leave me alone."

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EPILOGUE

Jadeheart looked at Starlight's grave for the last time. *It's time to go.* Sun warmed her back, and she felt a pang of grief as her kits gathered around her. "Mom," Trailgrass meowed. "I know it's hard. But we have to go." Jadeheart sighed. "I know."

In the last few moons, a disease had struck the Clans, forcing them to leave their home and the infected cats along with it. Fallenleaf had claimed to see a place perfect for the four Clans in her vision, so now the Clans were leaving their camps and setting off on a new journey.

When they arrived at camp, Jadeheart dug her nose into Puddleswipe's pelt. "I'll miss you, take care." Puddleswipe nodded her head. "Don't get too close," Adderjaw reminded her. He had offered to stay and take care of the remaining cats, saying that all of his family awaited him in StarClan, anyways.

Puddleswipe jerked from side to side in her nest, her eyes screwed

shut. For a moment, she managed to stay still, whispering, "I'll tell Sorrelpaw hello for you." With a heavy heart, Jadeheart trudged out of the camp. "May StarClan light your path," she whispered.

Okay, this is the end of my story! Feel free to message me if you'd like to continue this story, and I'd most likely give you permission to all of my characters and my plot. I hope you liked this story, and may StarClan light your path. ❤